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FEATURES

38 Giant Steps

The New York Giants' first game this season is Sept. 9 against Jacksonville. But their first legitimate game as a franchise was against ... New Britain?

43 Deportment of the Interior

Following stints with Kate Spade and Ralph Lauren, interior designer Patrick Mele is making an international statement from his native Greenwich.

49 Best of Connecticut

Our staff and you, the readers, have put together a list of the very best that Connecticut has to offer in food, entertainment, shopping and more.



DEPARTMENTS

7 Editor's Note

8 Voices

9 First

Our coastal state is finally joining others and making a commitment to offshore wind as a power source. In an update to a story last year, Windsor Locks native John Chapman is posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor, and is the first member of the Air Force since the Vietnam War to receive the U.S. military's highest decoration. And New Haven author Matthew Polly's new Bruce Lee biography unearths details about the legendary star.

16 Beachcombing

Five years ago she wrote a song called "Connecticut Anthem." Now, Middletown's Nekita Waller is the new state troubadour, and the first African-American solo artist to be chosen for that position.

19 This Month

Comedy takes the stage with a visit to Vinnie Brand's Stress Factory in Bridgeport and a Front Row interview with legendary comic Steven Wright.

35 From the Field

Plants eating animals? In Connecticut?

75 The Connecticut Table

We review Chester's Grano Arso, which draws its inspiration from a burnt peasant grain of 18th-century Italy. River, a waterfront restaurant 35 years in the making, finally comes to fruition. Cafe on the Green chef Alex Hernandez shares his recipe for filet mignon.

104 The Connecticut Files

Bridgeport's Freeman Houses are the last remnant of a unique community of color, and one of the most endangered historic sites in America.



92 Connecticut Public Guide

- "The Island Next Door: One Year Later"
- "Nature Talks"
- "Television Highlights"

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Cover design: Alyson Bowman; photo at Story & Soil Coffee in Hartford by Mara Lavitt and Alyson Bowman.
This page: Ann Sousa of Clinton peruses the selection at Van Wilgen's Garden Center; photo by Peter Hvizdak.

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Connecticut Magazine® (ISSN 0889-7670), a property of Hearst Connecticut Media Group, **100 Gando Drive, New Haven, CT 06513-1014,** is published monthly by Connecticut Magazine at 100 Gando Drive, New Haven, CT 06513. Periodicals postage paid at New Haven, Connecticut, and at additional mailing offices. Printed in U.S.A. Subscription rates: One year $19.97, two years $34.97, three years $39.97 in Connecticut; out-of-state residents add $5/yr. **POSTMASTER: Send changes of address to Connecticut Magazine Subscription Services, P.O. Box 3000, Denville, NJ 07834.**

editor's note

Our Best, and Yours

Every year we try to come up with ways to make our Best of Connecticut list bigger and better. After all, who wouldn't want more of the things that make our state a fun place to be?



This year, we wanted to hear from you, too, about your favorite things in Connecticut. So we put a call out in print and posted a poll on our website with loads of voting categories — from bars to bookstores, candy shops to country fairs — and were pleasantly surprised by your response. The result? For the first time in a decade, we have a Readers' Choice component to Best of Connecticut (page 49). Alongside our own picks for Food & Drink, Fun & Leisure and Shopping, you'll see Readers' Choice selections in each group.

We hope to build on this success next September, so look for information in this magazine and on our website in early 2019 about how to make your voice heard in Best of Connecticut. In the meantime, you can vote in two other polls — Great Places to Work and Best Restaurants. For Great Places to Work, offer us suggestions by filling out and mailing in the form on page 25, and for Best Restaurants, look for a full-page form in the October issue. You can also vote in both polls online at connecticutmag.com.

It's about getting your voices heard about Connecticut. We think that's better than ever.

Albie Yuravich
ayuravich@connecticutmag.com
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Corrections: Dr. Amit Desai, of 435 Highland Ave. in Cheshire, practices general dentistry, while Dr. Shyam Desai, of 3741 Main St. in Bridgeport, is an orthodontist. The dentists' specialties were incorrect in our list of Top Dentists in the August issue. Also, on the first page of the August issue's section on the Connecticut Open tennis tournament, the story "Catch a Rising Star" included an incorrect photo. The photo identified as Simona Halep of Romania was, in fact, Daniela Hantuchova of Slovakia.

contributors

Janie Rosman is a freelance writer and editor who believes everyone has a story and needs someone to tell it. She covers the arts, business, health and education for numerous publications and follows one of the country's largest infrastructure projects at nykeypad.wordpress.com. Rosman writes about Bridgeport's Discovery Museum, "A New Discovery," starting on page 30.

Kevin Fitzgerald is a freelance science writer living in Vernon. A member of the National Association of Science Writers, he has written for newspapers, encyclopedias and online sites. He is co-authoring a book about Madagascar. Fitzgerald explores the fascinating, but little known, world of carnivorous plants in Connecticut, "Savage Garden," beginning on page 35.

Douglas S. Malan enjoys writing about interesting, and often obscure, sports history. He is the author of *Muzzy Field: Tales from a Forgotten Ballpark*, among other books and articles. The Newington resident throws it back to the New York Giants' first game — in New Britain, of all places. The story, "Giant Steps," begins on page 38.

Pamela Brown is a former English professor, a prolific freelance writer, and author of *Faithful Love*, her first novel that inspired a love of writing. She resides in Connecticut with her daughter, Alexis, who makes her life an adventure. Brown details a recipe from one of the state's top chefs in a new column, "Chef's Special," starting on page 80.

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Warm Words For a Legend

Hi, just read the warm article on Donn Trenner ("Music, Memories and All The Jazz," August 2018) while on a bus en route from Port Authority to Binghamton, New York.

Agreed, Donn is a gem of a man! His music arrangements are a joy to play, and he is such a nice, nice man! Interplay Jazz Camp in Woodstock, Vermont, is fortunate, indeed, to have Donn on their faculty!

Donna Wood
Endicott, New York

Thanks for a GREAT article! There is NOTHING better than Monday nights at the Arch Street Tavern with Donn and the gang! The charts are superb and the band is smokin'. Go! Get the thrill that only fabulous big band sounds and incredible arrangements can give you. Experience hearing Donn on the ivories. Now that is a treat!

Nancee Beidler-Torns, via Facebook

Great article about a wonderful man who just happens to be very talented.

Pam Nelson, via Facebook

I had a lovely half-hour lesson with Donn during the Interplay Jazz Camp week in Woodstock this summer. He was so kind and helpful!

Sharen Conner, via Facebook

Donn is a living legend. We're lucky to have him around here!

Gary Grippo
Guilford, via Facebook

Wonderful story and what a great life he has led!

Jean Steck
St. Louis, via Facebook

Hear, Hear!

I fully agree with David Winer's August 2018 Voices letter on page 10. We avoid the restaurants that offer hard surfaces, have tables close together, and play music so in the foreground that conversation is impossible. I feel that the waitstaff will lose their hearing at an early age.

Miriam Miller
West Hartford

Hallelujah! I totally agree with Mr. Winer's comments about noisy restaurants. I have walked out of restaurants that are too noisy. I've asked to have the sound turned down. There are restaurants I'll never return to because of the loud noise level. I'm a retired Baby Boomer who enjoys dining out with people I wish to TALK WITH! Yes, including comments about noise levels in your restaurant reviews would be MUCH appreciated.

Roselle Macdonald
South Windsor

The Numbers Game

Regarding "The New College Try," (August 2018), about merging the state's community colleges, the interesting thing to note is that community college enrollments are up about 15 percent over the last 18 years. It would be interesting to see if full-time faculty hires are also up by 15 percent and also compare this to administrative hires across the community college system.

Joe Selvaggio
Branford, via Facebook

Don't Forget About Lithuanians

Your "Village Voices" Beachcombing article in the August issue about Frank Carrano and Steve Hamm was very nice, nostalgic, and accurate — up to a point. Italians were NOT the only immigrants sharing Wooster Square. Right across from Chapel Street was St. Casimir's RC Church, where the Lithuanian community came to worship. There was the church, the rectory, parochial school, and convent. There was also a dance hall, a bar/kitchen, theater, where many events, dances, childrens' events (Scouts, plays, exhibits, language lessons, celebrations) took place.

I should know, it was my parish!

It was only very recently that the Archdiocese sold the property.

So, don't do tunnel vision — look around you.

Dahlia Ramanauskas
Ivoryton





The five turbines of the Block Island Wind Farm produce 30 megawatts of power annually. Northeastern coastal states, including Connecticut, have plans to expand wind energy production greatly in the coming years.

Winds of Change

CONNECTICUT FINALLY MAKES A COMMITMENT TO OFFSHORE WIND. CAN THE RENEWABLE POWER SOURCE BECOME A MAJOR PART OF THE STATE'S ENERGY PORTFOLIO?

BY LUTHER TURMELLE

It has been a historic couple of years for those who believe offshore wind projects are a critical component in Connecticut and the nation's energy future.

Deepwater Wind's Block Island Wind Farm, the nation's first commercial wind farm, began operating about 4 miles southeast of Block Island in December 2016. The five-turbine project generates 30 megawatts of power, enough for about 17,000 homes.

Connecticut made some history of its own this June when the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection selected Deepwater Wind as one of the winners of its renewable energy-procurement efforts. The 200-megawatt project, which could be operational by 2023, will be built in federal waters about halfway between Montauk, New York, and Martha's Vineyard.

But Connecticut's initial foray into offshore wind power pales in comparison to neighboring states in New England and the Northeast, some renewable energy experts are quick to point out.

The 200-megawatt project that DEEP officials selected in June represents only 3 percent of Connecticut's electric load, according to Emily Lewis, a policy analyst with Acadia Center, a New England-based environmental group with offices in Hartford. The output is expected to power about 100,000 homes. Connecticut's neighbors have far more ambitious offshore wind plans moving forward.

New Jersey's goal is to have 3,500 megawatts of power in its portfolio by 2032, for example. Massachusetts has been a trailblazer in the wind power movement. Even tiny Rhode Island — with less than a third of Connecticut's population — is procuring 400 megawatts of offshore wind power, Lewis says.

"It seems like Connecticut has been playing catch-up for years," Lewis says.

State Rep. Lonnie Reed, D-Branford, chairwoman of the Connecticut legislature's Energy and Technology Committee, says that "a sense of proportion and perspective is required when making these kinds of 'lagging behind' comparisons." She adds, "Our state has certain physical constraints that others don't. The state lacks direct access to parts of the ocean where the wind power is at its strongest. The Sound is a fragile estuary — not wide-open ocean: wind speeds there are slow."

Rob Klee, DEEP's commissioner, also dismisses claims that Connecticut is playing catch-up to neighboring states when it comes to adding offshore wind to energy portfolios. "We have demonstrated with our actions, our priorities, that we are in the wind-power game," Klee says.

The latest evidence of that, he says, is the July 31 request for proposals that DEEP released seeking energy producers that give off no carbon emissions.

Lewis says that amid concerns the owner of the Millstone nuclear power plant in Waterford — Virginia-based Dominion Energy — may close the plant early, Connecticut officials ought to view offshore wind "as an important part of any transition plan when the state has to move away from that source of power."

The language in the RFP appears to give DEEP some flexibility in how much offshore wind it can select in the zero-carbon process. Klee describes the language in the RFP as "a recognition that nuclear [power] isn't going to be around forever. This is about making the transition from nuclear to other renewables."

Connecticut has committed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the coming

decades. The first target comes in 2020, when emissions must be 10 percent below 1990 levels. By 2030, emissions must be 45 percent below 2001 levels, ramping up to 85 percent below 2001 levels by 2050. The state also must hit targets for percentage of Connecticut electricity that comes from renewables such as wind, solar and fuel cells. Twenty percent of power needs to be met by renewables by 2020. The percentage doubles a decade later.

Energy suppliers who want to be considered for inclusion in the zero-carbon RFP process have until Sept. 14 to submit their proposals. DEEP will announce the projects it has selected either by the end of this year or in early 2019, according to Klee. The expectation, Klee says, is that the specific language in this latest RFP will attract additional wind power proposals.

■ ■ ■

The issue of offshore wind and how much Connecticut needs to have in its energy portfolio isn't just about making sure the state has enough energy in the coming years. An expansion of offshore wind projects serving southern New England states is expected to be a significant economic driver.

To that end, Massachusetts officials several years ago remade New Bedford, historically a whaling, fishing and shipbuilding center, into a hub to service offshore-wind projects off the state's southeastern coast. Connecticut officials have seen what Massachusetts has done with New Bedford's $113 million Marine Development Terminal and hope to duplicate that in New London, a city with its own rich whaling history.

The Connecticut Bond Commission has approved a $15 million investment in the city's state pier so it can become a staging area for the Deepwater Wind project and any others that may come along in the future. Deepwater Wind has agreed to invest $15 million of its own money to develop New London as a staging area.

Turning the New London pier into a center for this and other heavy industry projects is expected to result in 1,400 direct and indirect jobs in Connecticut, according to state officials.

"This announcement, combined with the state's recent commitment of bond funding to revitalize the State Pier, demonstrates that Connecticut is serious about securing its share of the highly paid offshore wind jobs coming to the Northeast," says John Humphries, lead organizer for the Connecticut Roundtable on Climate and Jobs, a coalition of environmental groups and labor unions.

Mike Ausere, vice president of business development and energy strategy for the state's largest utility, Eversource, is bullish on the role offshore wind will play in driving Connecticut and New England's economic and energy future.

"The offshore wind industry is still in its infancy in the United States, but I see us catching up with the rest of the world quite quickly," says Ausere, whose company was one of two unsuccessful bidders for Connecticut's 200-megawatt project. "This is an industry that is moving very fast and we're still very much committed to it. We are going to see a tremendous level of growth going forward."

Wind farms off the southern New England coast have a unique advantage that shouldn't be lost on Connecticut lawmakers, Ausere says. "New England's major load centers are in southern New England and are relatively close to the ocean," he says. "That reduces the cost of building lengthy transmission lines [from other parts of the region]."

Ausere declined to predict how many jobs might be created if New London becomes a staging area for the offshore wind industry. But he says if growth in offshore wind farms in New England and the Northeast plays out as expected, there will need to be multiple hubs up and down the New England coast to service them. "One advantage that New London has that New Bedford doesn't is direct access to the ocean," Ausere says. Klee says that is important because bridges and other types of impediments would make it harder to bring out to sea partially assembled turbines and towers that make up wind farms.

As the number of offshore wind farms off southern New England grows and reaches a critical mass in the coming years, it is likely to drive down the cost of the renewable energy source, according to Ausere. Currently, electricity produced by burning fossil fuels is cheaper than that created by offshore wind, he says.

Lewis of the Acadia Center says the price range for offshore wind power in Massachusetts is between 6.5 cents and 7.4 cents lower than most industry observers had expected. Original projections have Massachusetts consumers saving $1.4 billion over the life of a 20-year contract, she says.

Matthew Morrissey, vice president of Deepwater Wind's development efforts in New England, says pricing of offshore wind is already highly competitive with fossil fuels in some cases. The 90-megawatt South Fork Wind Farm that Deepwater is developing more than 15 miles south of the Rhode Island coast was so competitively priced that the Long Island Power Authority selected it over a natural gas project. The project is supposed to begin operating in 2022.

ISO-New England, which oversees the regional electric grid, is projecting that fossil fuel-powered generation units equal to about 16 percent of the region's current generating capacity will shut down between 2013 and 2021. These coal- and oil-fired and nuclear power plants are likely to be replaced primarily by new wind resources and natural gas-fired plants.

Morrissey says replacing older, less efficient power plants with offshore wind power is another way the industry will drive costs down for consumers.

■ ■ ■

Having the projects located in federal waters is critical because the strongest winds are found farther from shore. Some of the highest sustained wind speeds along the entire U.S. coast are found off southern New England's shores, Ausere says, particularly in the winter when the region's demand for electricity is high.

Reed, the legislator from Branford, is encouraged by the fact that the state's



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two dominant energy companies "are now pushing hard for wind farm development. Eversource has proposed joint ventures of its own," she says, adding that none of those projects have been selected thus far.

Eversource's partner is a Danish company, Orsted, a well-known player in the renewable energy business. Their joint venture company is Bay State Wind.

Wind farms' greater distances from shore also reduce the potential for complaints that wind turbines will spoil ocean views, a problem that some say was responsible in part for the demise of a Massachusetts project in Nantucket Sound several years ago.

A spokesman for the holding company that oversees The United Illuminating Co., Orange-based Avangrid, says the company "is firmly committed to renewable energy in general and wind energy in particular."

Ed Crowder, a spokesman for the holding company, which oversees all of the U.S. properties of Spanish energy giant Iberdrola, says Avangrid Renewables "is one of the nation's leading renewable energy companies, with 7.1 million gigawatts of renewable energy capacity — mostly wind — and a presence in 22 states."

But even though Avangrid is headquartered in Orange, Connecticut is not one of the states that are part of the company's wind power portfolio.

Avangrid has partnered with a Danish company, Copenhagen Infrastructure Partners, to create the joint venture known as the Vineyard Wind project. Massachusetts officials picked the 800-megawatt project and are giving Vineyard Wind the right to negotiate a purchase power agreement with that state's electric utilities. Vineyard Wind could be operational by 2021, a full two years sooner than the Deepwater Wind project that Connecticut officials chose.

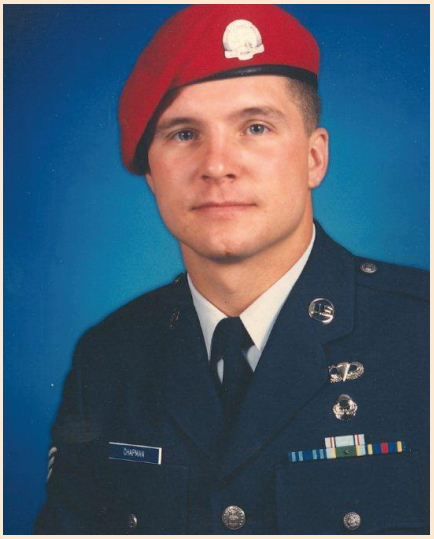
Connecticut residents who fear they will one day see wind farms in Long Island Sound should not worry about that possibility, Reed says.

"Any proposal to bring wind turbines offshore in Long Island Sound is dead on arrival," she says. "The fishing industry, recreational boaters, commercial shipping, along with shoreline residents and environmentalists, would go on the attack."

And while Connecticut has a smattering of land-based turbines — off Route 44 in Colebrook and in New Haven — high density levels and comparatively low wind speeds limit wind power's potential on land. For the state to get a significant portion of its electricity from wind power, the future lies not on land, but out to sea.

Highest Honor

Killed in Afghanistan in 2002, Connecticut Airman John Chapman Finally Awarded the Medal of Honor



The same night she learned that her son, airman John Chapman, died in Afghanistan, Terry Chapman had a vivid dream of her child fighting alone in a trench. John died on March 4, 2002, and initial accounts indicated the Windsor Locks native was killed while the SEAL Team 6 members he served with were nearby, but Terry always knew there was more to the story.

"In my heart I felt that he died alone," she says.

We profiled Chapman and the heroism of his final hours in our January 2017 issue. In April 2018 it was finally announced that Chapman would become the first member of the Air Force since the Vietnam War to receive the Medal of Honor, the U.S. military's highest decoration.

As of this writing, Chapman's widow, Valerie, was scheduled to receive the medal from President Donald Trump on Aug. 22. Chapman is also survived by the couple's daughters, Madison and Brianna.

Part of the Air Force's elite 24th Special Tactics Squadron, Chapman, 36, was a technical sergeant embedded with a SEAL Team 6 reconnaissance team. In the early hours of March 4, 2002, his team was ordered to the 10,469-foot peak of Takur Ghar. There they hoped to monitor the Shah-i-Kot Valley below, where the U.S. was launching its largest operation to date in the war. As the helicopter carrying the team landed on the summit, it was hit with a rocket-propelled grenade. SEAL member Neil C. Roberts was ejected from the chopper which eventually crash-landed a safe distance away. Later, Chapman and his team returned in a new chopper in a desperate attempt to save Roberts, who was likely already dead.

Chapman charged off the chopper while under fire and seized an enemy bunker, killing two fighters there. Leaving cover to protect his teammates, he charged a second bunker, killing the enemy fighter who occupied it, but was wounded in the process and apparently knocked unconscious. Thinking him dead, his teammates retreated from the mountaintop.

But Chapman was still alive.

A fellow Air Force combat controller stationed nearby heard Chapman repeating his call sign after his teammates retreated. In recent years, new analysis of footage from an airship and drone nearby shows Chapman fighting on for at least an hour and killing several enemies in close quarters. The Pentagon released part of the footage in August. He died while putting himself in harm's way to provide cover fire for an approaching U.S. helicopter carrying reinforcements.

Chapman was posthumously awarded the Air Force Cross in 2003, but his family is thrilled with the recognition of the military's highest honor.

"He would probably say, 'Oh, I was just doing my job.' But he's not here; we're here and this is important to us. I couldn't be happier," says Chapman's sister, Lori Longfritz, who lives in Cheyenne, Wyoming.

Terry Chapman, who moved to Colorado Springs from Windsor Locks about eight years ago, says the award "was such a long time coming I was thinking that this was not ever going to happen. We are relieved that finally the story is going to be out there."

On Sept. 30, Windsor Locks will honor its hometown hero with a ceremony starting at 1 p.m. that will include the unveiling of a new monument outside Memorial Hall in honor of Chapman. His mother will be in attendance with other members of Chapman's family. There will be a flyover by the Air National Guard and talks by dignitaries.

"For a town of our size, this is obviously a very, very big event," says J. Christopher Kervick, Windsor Locks' first selectman who knew Chapman.

Lori has co-written an upcoming book about her brother with Dan Schilling. Movie rights to the book have also been sold.

In May, Britt Slabinski, Chapman's team leader, was awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions that night on Takur Ghar. A *Newsweek* article reported that the Navy has resisted Chapman receiving the Medal of Honor because it would mean the Navy would have to admit the SEALs left a teammate behind.

Chapman's family declined to comment on those assertions.

"At this point in time I want to focus on John's Medal of Honor because that's what this is all about, that's what we've been wanting for 16 years," Longfritz says.

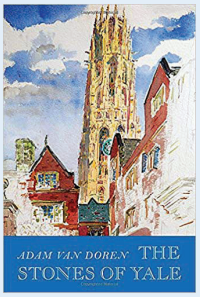
Asked if there is anything she would like people to know about her son, Terry says they should know "he was a good man before all this came about. His whole life he was a good person, caring about other people first. Most of the people who knew him already have their good memories of him, but now the general public will have an idea of what he was like." | ERIK OFGANG |

PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHN CHAPMAN'S FAMILY

the reading room

THE STONES OF YALE

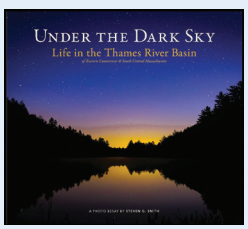
By Adam Van Doren
David R. Godine, Publisher
197 pages, 2018



A teacher and associate fellow of Yale, Van Doren presents his watercolors of the various architectural wonders that make up the historic campus complemented by essays that, as a blurb on the book jacket by Paul Goldberger describes, "makes the Yale campus not monumental but intimate, inviting and warm." This campus tour of architecture and artistry stops in at Mory's, gazes up at Harkness Tower, leans on the Yale Fence, and gets swallowed up by The Whale (Ingalls Rink). Speaking of Yale hockey, Andrew Miller, captain of the 2013 national championship team, was in Van Doren's class during the Bulldogs' run to the Frozen Four. Secret societies aren't overlooked — Scroll and Key's Prospect Street headquarters is deemed "most impressive" of the 41 on campus. | MIKE WOLLSCHLAGER |

UNDER THE DARK SKY
Life in the Thames River Basin of Eastern Connecticut & South Central Massachusetts

A photo essay by Steven G. Smith
Wesleyan University Press
112 pages, 2018

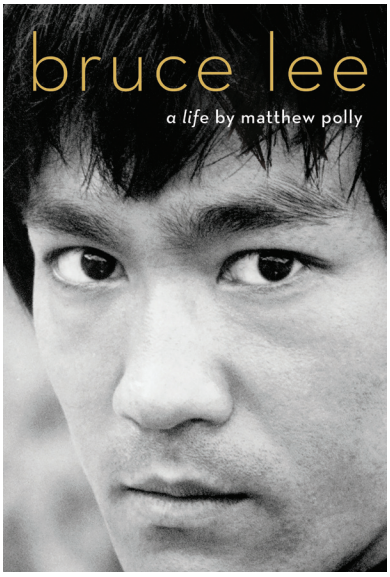


We've often called it the Quiet Corner in these pages. Pilots refer to it as the dark corner, where the largely unbroken field of nighttime light from our nation's capital to Boston falls away. But the darkness of eastern Connecticut belies its complexities and peoples. Pulitzer Prize-winning photographer Steven G. Smith spent three years documenting life here, along the basin of the Thames River from southern Massachusetts to coastal Connecticut. Roughly following the flow of the seasons and with scenes of national park-worthy nature, colonial tricorn hat-topped history, expressive Native American heritage and naval pride, this documentary-style photo essay tells a rich story with emotive images and sparse words. While the Commonwealth features here, this is truly a portrait of Connecticut's east, containing many little-known tidbits. (Did you know Mansfield was once the center of silk production in America?) As writer Steve Grant puts it in his foreword, the photos here "amount to a distillation of the landscape and culture of a region that may well be the last remaining expression of an idyllic nineteenth century Connecticut." | ALBIE YURAVICH |

| first | **book**

Kung Fu Chronicler

A NEW HAVEN AUTHOR'S BRUCE LEE BIOGRAPHY UNEARTHS NEW DETAILS ABOUT THE LEGENDARY STAR | BY ERIK OFGANG



When Matthew Polly first saw Bruce Lee's *Enter the Dragon* in 1983, the self-described "skinny, bullied 12-year-old" immediately began to idolize the martial arts superstar. A few years later, Polly, who now lives in New Haven, dropped out of college at Princeton and spent two years living in China learning kung fu from Shaolin monks. He documents the experience in his bestselling 2007 memoir *American Shaolin*. For his next book, *Tapped Out,* Polly studied mixed martial arts and squared off against younger fighters in better shape. In between trading blows with Shaolin kung fu masters and mixed martial arts professionals, he graduated from Princeton, became a Rhodes Scholar and started a family. He is currently a fellow at Yale, the same university where his wife is a professor.

About eight years ago he started looking for a new book project. "I wanted to do something where I didn't get punched in the face," recalls Polly, author of *Bruce Lee: A Life,* released by Simon & Schuster in June. "A friend suggested that I do something on Bruce Lee since he was my lifelong hero. I thought that was a terrible idea because I assumed there had to be a bunch of really good biographies about him since he is the most famous Asian American to ever live, and I was shocked to discover there weren't."

Polly found only one biography of Lee still in print. It was published 25 years ago, and he says it "was pretty poorly written," with no footnotes. "I felt offended on Bruce's behalf and I thought I could pay back the debt I owe him for changing my life for the better by giving him the biography he deserves," he recalls over lunch at Archie Moore's in New Haven.

So began Polly's seven-year odyssey into the life of the legend. During that time Polly spent six months researching in Hong Kong and another six months in Seattle and Los Angeles, where Lee had lived in America. He conducted more than 100 interviews, speaking with Lee's friends, family members, former classmates and lovers, stars he had trained and rivals he fought and defeated. Along the way he unearthed many new details of Lee's life, including the fact that Lee had Dutch-Jewish heritage: Lee's great-grandfather, Mozes Hartog Bosman, was the son of a kosher butcher from Rotterdam. Though Lee's mixed Eurasian heritage had long been known and he faced discrimination growing up for not being "pure Chinese," Bosman had been mistakenly identified as German Catholic.

At 600-plus pages, *Bruce Lee: A Life* is comprehensive but does not get mired in the did-I-really-need-to-know-that details that can sometimes slow large biographies. Nor is it an exercise in hero worship. Though Polly's admiration for Lee is clear, the biography spares no punch (or kick) in its portrayal. The star's extramarital affairs are covered, as is Lee's often-glossed-over fondness for cannabis.

For Polly, the key to understanding Lee was the realization that Lee had been a child star.

"He was the Macaulay Culkin of Hong Kong and he played weepies, comedies, melodramas; his father was an actor," Polly says. "I found if you understood him as an actor first his personality made a lot more sense. He was a showman, he was a showoff, he could be a braggart, he was charming, engaged, energetic, all the things you associate with actors."

Offscreen he helped bring kung fu to the West. "He was the first to teach an African American. At that time the Chinese and African-American communities were in conflict," Polly says. "He didn't care what race or ethnicity anyone was, as long as they were sincere."

Lee is almost exclusively known for four of his films: *Enter the Dragon, The Big Boss, Fist of Fury* and *The Way of the Dragon*. He died in July 1973, a month before *Enter the Dragon* was released, and just as his career was starting to take off in the U.S. He was only 32. Polly's work sheds new light on both the circumstances and cause of his death.



Matthew Polly
PHOTO: JUSTIN GUARIGLIA

"Bruce died in the apartment of Betty Ting Pei, a sultry Taiwanese actress. For decades everyone has been trying to cover up the affair," he says. "I was the first Western reporter to whom Betty finally confessed that she was Lee's mistress."

As for the cause of death, Polly says "the official explanation for Lee's death is that he died from an allergic reaction to aspirin, but it doesn't make any sense because Lee used aspirin most of his adult life without any side effects. I think the more likely theory is he died from heat stroke, a common killer of young, athletic men. Several months prior to his death, he had the sweat glands removed from under his armpits. The day he died, July 20, 1973, was the hottest of the month in tropical Hong Kong. He was performing scene after kung fu scene from his upcoming movie when he felt dizzy and complained of a headache, two common signs of heat exhaustion."

When it comes to Lee's legacy, Polly hopes his book provides a more complete picture of an extraordinary cultural figure who was so much more than just a martial arts master.

"I think when someone becomes an icon they almost become like a mythical demigod from the Greek myths, so they come to stand for some ideal. Like Aphrodite is the goddess of love. Bruce Lee is the god of kicking ass or he's the god of the warrior. So when someone is a great fighter, they're like, 'Oh, he was like Bruce Lee,' so the fighting, martial arts aspect of his persona is what's remembered," Polly says. "I think the two things that are most important about his legacy is that he was the first Asian-American male actor to ever star in a Hollywood movie, so he was kind of the Jackie Robinson of Chinese actors. The second is that he introduced more Westerners to Asian culture than any other human being to ever live. So he's a missionary figure, someone who bridged the gap between East and West."

mattpolly.com



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Remain Seated

RIVERTON'S HITCHCOCK CHAIR CO. CELEBRATES 200 YEARS | BY ERIK OFGANG

In 1818 something amazing happened in Connecticut for the world of sit-down furniture: Lambert Hitchcock started making chairs.

It wasn't just the chairs he made — though they remain celebrated for their distinctive and beautiful designs — but how he made them.

"He was really the first person to bring mass production into the furniture industry," says Rick Swenson, owner of The Hitchcock Chair Co., which will begin celebrating its bicentennial on Labor Day weekend.

For the festivities, a barn at the Riverton Fairgrounds will be filled with a display of historic, restored and modern Hitchcock chairs tracing the brand's 200-year history. The barn is a short walk from the company's showroom in Riverton, a hamlet of Barkhamsted.

Hitchcock was a native of Cheshire and a graduate of the Episcopal Academy of Cheshire, now Cheshire Academy.



PHOTO: HITCHCOCK CHAIR CO.

Before starting his company in 1818, he apprenticed with woodworker Silas Cheney in Litchfield. Cheney taught him the intricacies of creating an artisan chair product, but Cheney wasn't his only teacher. Hitchcock was also deeply influenced by legendary Connecticut clockmaker Eli Terry and other pioneering clockmakers in the region.

"One of the things that they were able to do was to take the cost of clocks and bring them down by producing interchangeable parts," Swenson says. "That made clocks very affordable for the average farmer or settler."

Hitchcock wanted to do the same thing for the world of furniture, which was equally expensive because chairs were custom made by hand. After Hitchcock's apprenticeship was finished, he connected with a lumberyard in what is now Riverton, and for the first time brought interchangeable parts to the chair industry.

"He hired people to just turn legs, and other people to make seats and other people to bend this part, and that part," Swenson says.

The strategy worked. By the end of the 1820s Hitchcock's company was producing more than 15,000 chairs a year. However, as is often the case with innovators, he was not a successful businessman and the company struggled. He ultimately sold his stake in the Hitchcock Chair Co. in 1844, and by the 1860s the company he founded had changed its name and stopped making chairs.

Almost 100 years later, in 1946, West Hartford shoe salesman John Kenney was fishing on the Farmington River when he came upon the old mill operated by the Hitchcock Chair Co. Kenney became fascinated by the building and the history of Hitchcock and his chairs, which were still collector's items. Kenney reopened the Hitchcock Chair Co. later that year. The reborn company thrived for decades, before closing again in 2006 due to declining sales.

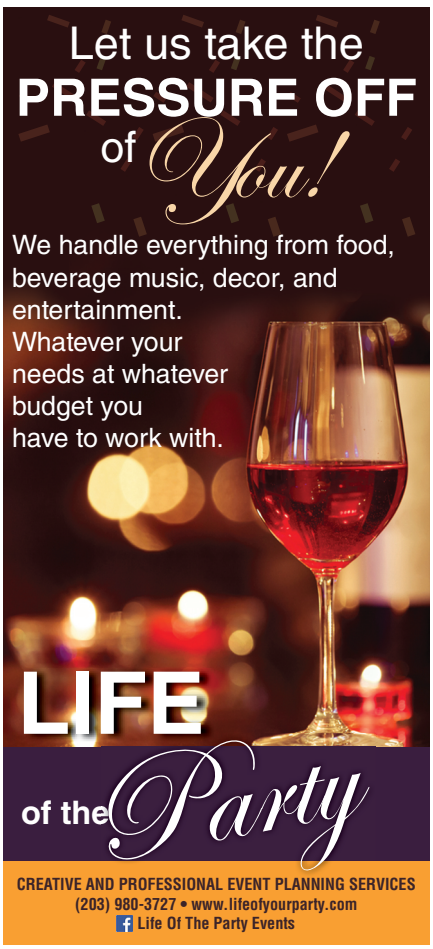
This time the dormant era was much shorter. In 2010 Swenson and his business partner, Gary Hath, purchased the Hitchcock name, plans and artwork, bringing the brand back to life for the second time. Swenson had previously worked with the Hitchcock Chair Co. to refurbish and refinish old chairs and was very familiar with the iconic chair style.

Swenson says that just visiting the showroom and coming to Riverton gives one a sense of the history of the company and region. "It's an interesting trip to come up here. It's a beautiful little village to see, it's kind of like stepping back in time. It still looks like the 1800s here."

Back in the 2000s the company had about 200 employees. Today Swenson employs fewer than a dozen. The original mill is no longer used by the company, but the chairs are still made in Riverton in a woodshop connected to the showroom. They are sold from this showroom, at various dealers, and are shipped nationally. In addition to chairs, the company produces other types of furniture including tables, dressers, hutches, servers, beds and mirrors.

"We're trying to endure [making] a handcrafted product in Connecticut. It's getting harder and harder," Swenson says. "I attend closing auctions of companies larger than mine probably once every six months, just in New England. It's definitely a difficult industry to be in. We're hoping to survive. After 200 years of coming and going, the company is resilient. Hopefully we can stay around another 100 years, and the history and the story can go on."

hitchcockchair.com



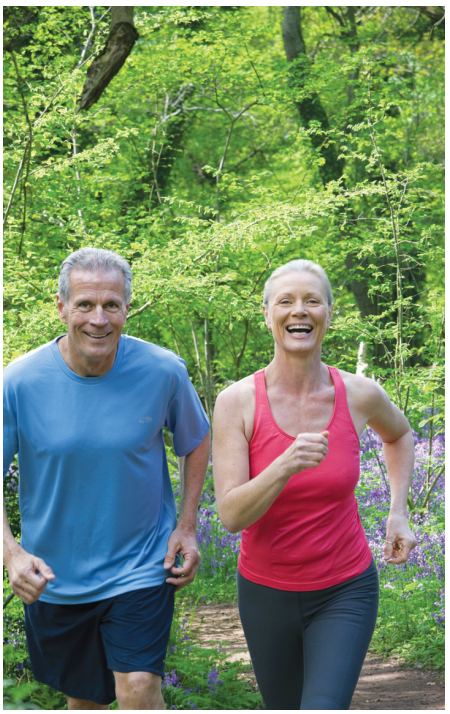
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Singing a Different Tune

MIDDLETOWN'S NEKITA WALLER IS MAKING HER 'OWN LANE' AS THE STATE'S NEW TROUBADOUR

Nekita Waller sings the national anthem before a WNBA basketball game between the Minnesota Lynx and Connecticut Sun at Mohegan Sun Arena in 2016.

Connecticut's new state troubadour is not just another "folkie" like those who preceded her. And she is the first African-American solo artist to be chosen for the position.

"I'm a soul singer," says Nekita Waller, who was appointed by the state's Office of the Arts in June and began her duties Aug. 1. "But I do have stories, just like a folk singer. A lot of it is from personal experience."

Waller, who spent the first few years of her life in Birmingham, Alabama, has benefited from that formative, down-home time when she absorbed the sounds of her grandfather playing harmonica, her two uncles playing guitar and her great-aunts singing gospel music.

Shortly after her parents, Edwina and Kenneth Eric Waller, moved the family to Bloomfield, she began to sing, often in front of an appreciative audience.

"I credit my mom," Waller says. "She put me in all kinds of talent shows at an early age. She encouraged me to go out in the front. She told me, 'Don't be shy. I think you've got something here.'"

Her first big performance came when she was 13, on stage at the fabled Apollo Theater in Harlem. "I had won a talent show at Weaver High School and the top three got to go to the Apollo. I had won $1,000. Oh my gosh!"

Waller was starstruck to see LL Cool J, who was also on the bill at the Apollo. "I remember being backstage in my white dress. I was scared. My knees were knocking. I didn't know if I was strong enough to be in front of that audience. They can boo you. They can be mean in New York!

"When I went out there, my first notes came out a little awkward. But I ended on a good note. And they didn't boo me!"

Waller has performed ever since, including at Middletown's Summer Sounds concerts, at weddings and at the International Festival of Arts & Ideas in New Haven. On bigger stages, she sang the national anthem for Boston Celtics and UConn basketball games.

Five or so years ago she wrote her own anthem, calling it "Connecticut Anthem." It's a celebration of the state and a spirited answer to those in other parts who know nothing about the Nutmeg State or dismiss it as boring.

In the first verse of the song, she announces: "I grew up in Connecticut" and responds to people who ask: "Where's that at?"

She sings about its country roads and points out: "Here we pick apples in the fall. Believe it or not, we got four seasons / Snow in the spring for no good reason."

She goes on to reminisce about the places her parents took her when she was a kid: riding the horses at the carousel at Bushnell Park, going to the circus at the Hartford Civic Center, shopping at G. Fox and Sage-Allen when they were prime destinations in downtown Hartford.

"Hey! You can love it or leave it," she sings. "But it's a state I believe in. I'm proud to say I'm Connecticut born and Connecticut raised."

The song, with its accompanying video, helped seal the deal when the Office of the Arts selection panel was considering the 14 applicants for the troubadour job. There have been 16 of them since 1991; the duties include promoting the state in song. Waller is excited to be doing this as No. 17, having succeeded singer-songwriter Kate Callahan.

"I'm looking forward to reaching out to the schools, telling them my story," she

PHOTOS: JESSICA HILL

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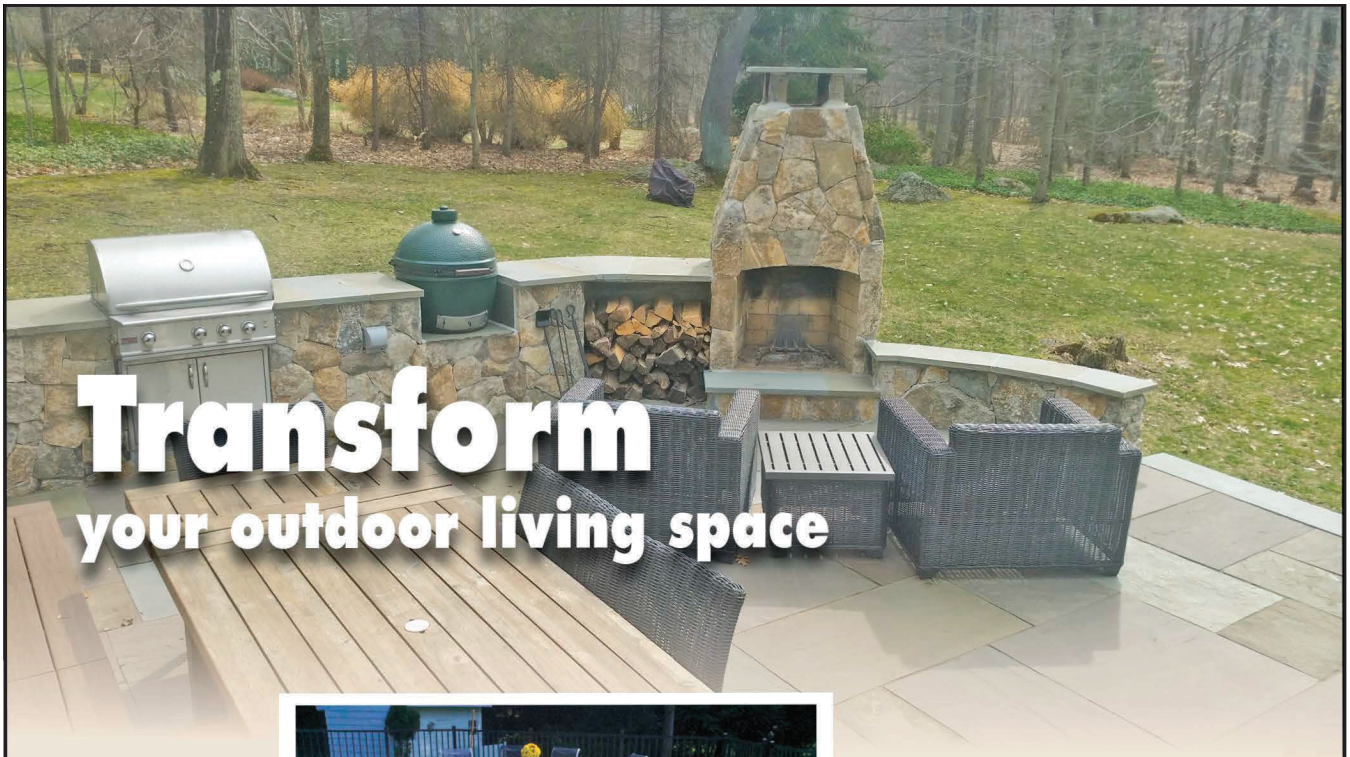
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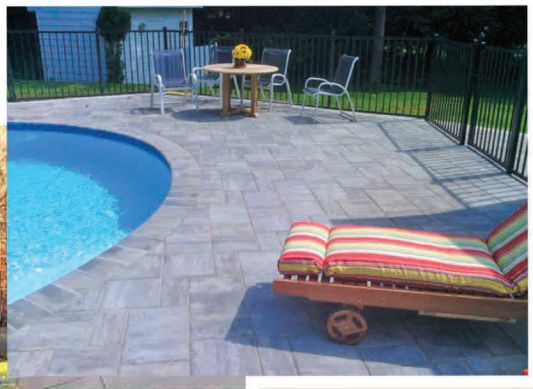


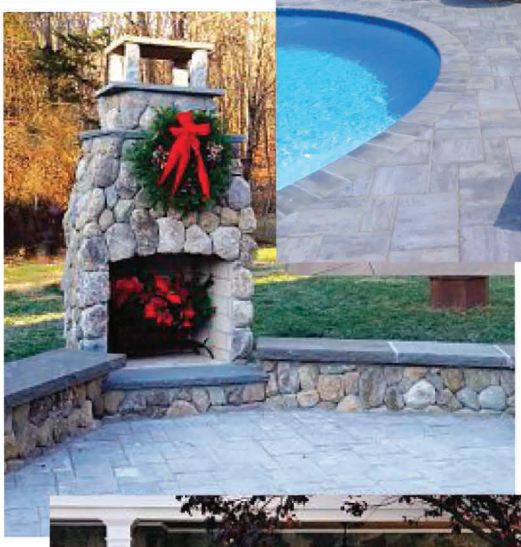
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says. "I also want to learn from them. What can they teach me?"

Asked what her message will be to those students, she replies, "Never quit. Never underestimate the power of music and your voice. Also, it takes a team of people to make change."

This has been an emotional year for Waller. Her father died in March; she recorded her anthem three days later at Horizon Studio in West Haven. She says the song "kind of came back to life as I saw my father go through what he went through with his illness."

She recalls the deep emotions of that recording session. "I asked myself, 'What can I do to celebrate him?'"

For the past 10 years Waller has lived in Middletown, where we met for this interview. Sitting in a restaurant on Main Street, Waller says, "This town is a comfortable place where you can see the food, the arts and enjoy the scenery. We've got everything from Italian food to pie. Some Main Streets are just a long highway."

For many people in Connecticut, she notes, "It's small-town living. In the local grocery stores in Bloomfield and Windsor, where I grew up, everyone knows you."

When I remark it's not every day you come across somebody with such a positive attitude about our state, she gives me that look and says, "There are some happy people in Connecticut! You have to find the little golden nuggets. I find peace on the water here, at Harbor Park." The park overlooks the Connecticut River.



Nekita Waller recording at Silk City Music Factory in Manchester.

Being the state troubadour doesn't put you on easy street — Waller will receive a stipend of $2,500 for each of the three years she has the position — but she says she is "very excited and grateful for this opportunity. I don't take any of this for granted. You have to stay humble. It can be given and it can be taken."

Waller adds, "You have to create your own lane. And that's what I'm doing."

(For a list of Waller's upcoming shows, go to *nekitawaller.com*.)

Randall Beach is the longtime columnist for the New Haven Register*, where his column appears Fridays and Sundays.*

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BY GREG MOODY



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Since it was founded in 1985 by music superstars Willie Nelson, Neil Young and John Mellencamp, the now-annual **Farm Aid** benefit concert has raised over $50 million to support American farmers. This year the concert takes place Sept. 22 at the Xfinity Theatre in Hartford — the festival's first time in Connecticut — where the three original founders will be joined by Dave Matthews and Tim Reynolds, Chris Stapleton, Kacey Musgraves and more musical superstars. The all-day concert kicks off at noon. ***farmaid.org***

A WHOLE LOTTA SHAKIN'

On a December day in 1956 at Sun Records in Memphis, Tennessee, a chance gathering of four young artists — all on the cusp of becoming rock 'n' roll icons — led to a once-in-a-lifetime jam session. The music of Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis and Carl Perkins comes alive again on Sept. 19 at 8 p.m. when the Tony award-winning musical ***Million Dollar Quartet*** comes to the Warner Theatre in Torrington. Tickets start at $42. ***warnertheatre.org***

DO THE BLUTO

Prepare to twist the night away on Sept. 17 at 8 p.m. as the Uncas Ballroom at Mohegan Sun hosts the ***Animal House* 40th Anniversary Toga Party**. Tim "Otter" Matheson will be there, and the band from the movie, Otis Day & the Knights, will be rolling out the tunes. Tickets are $30; 21 and over only. ***mohegansun.com***

ON YOUR MARKS ...

Thousands of runners, from amateurs to Olympians, as well as the spectators who cheer them on, converge on the Elm City each Labor Day for the **Faxon Law New Haven Road Race**. At this year's event on Sept. 3, there are courses for just about any speed, from the USATF men's and women's 20K national championships, to half-marathons, 5Ks, two-person relays and a kids fun run. As always, proceeds support local charities, and new this year is a downtown after-party at BAR (separate ticket required). See website for registration costs and other information. ***newhavenroadrace.org***



PHOTO: CATHERINE AVALONE



'SCHOOL OF LOVE'

Attendees at the third annual **Friends of Ecole Agape Pig Roast and Concert** on Sept. 15 will enjoy more than some delicious food (with lots of sides, including vegan options) and live music. They'll also certainly earn their wings, as funds raised will help support Ecole Agape ("school of love"), the only free girls' school in Haiti, which helps provide an education to more than 200 girls ages 1-6. Free admission with a donation; to reserve tickets for the 2-8 p.m. event, call 860-810-6656. ***facebook.com/friendsofecoleagape***

See September 2018 calendar listings at connecticutmag.com/calendar


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Steven Wright is a legend. *Rolling Stone* and Comedy Central each ranked him in the top 25 on their lists of the greatest stand-up comedians of all time. Granted those lists are subjective, but technically so are his Academy Award (Best Short Live-Action Film in 1989), two Emmy nominations and two Grammy nominations. Wright will be making a return trip to the Fox Theater at Foxwoods Resort Casino on Sept. 8.

One of my favorite movies is *Half Baked* ...
Dave Chappelle, what a genius.

Yeah, so you were The Guy on the Couch. But you're a well-known comedian, you have a few lines in the movie, it wasn't a cameo, you're on the couch the whole time, so why was that role uncredited?
Because at the time it was like a cool thing to be in a movie and not have your name credited. In hindsight …

So it was just a cool thing to do?
I was told it was a cool thing to do. I didn't think it was a cool thing to do. And I didn't really care either way, so I just agreed.

Do you still have the same agent?
(Laughs) Yes, and he's never told me his name, so he followed it through all the way. But more interesting than that is how I got in that movie. There was a show, I think Bob Costas had a talk show at like midnight for a couple years, and Dave Chappelle was the guest host and I was his guest. He's interviewing me for like a half-hour and then when it was all over I said, "We should be in a movie sometime." And he said, "I'm making a movie right now, do you want to be in it?" I said yes, and that was it.

Can you just carve out a few hours in your day to sit down and write jokes, or does it need to come naturally?
It's from noticing everything. You're just reacting to the world. … You know a mosaic painting, right? The little tiny chips. The world to me is a gigantic mosaic painting. You wake up and then you go to sleep. In that time of being awake, you're bombarded with fragments and pieces of information. And some of those pieces can be linked together to be jokes. It's just from noticing. I'm not trying to write jokes, I just notice.

You're in comedy, and you do music, and you paint, and you've been a producer, you're in front of the camera, behind the camera; how do you figure out what you want to do each day?
Well, I like to write. Every day I get up and I drink coffee. I have a really good imagination, but when I drink coffee it's like I'm on drugs. I mean it's even more. So then I just do whatever I want, really, but in the morning I just drink the coffee and I try to write whatever comes into my head. Most of the time it's not even jokes, I just like words. I love words and I like to think and I like to write. So even though it doesn't come out, it's not out in the public as an article or a book, I just love writing.

Is that something that you need to do? Is your day thrown off if you don't get out what is in your head in the morning?
I love doing it. I love to think. I love what's in my head. I can't believe the shit that's in my head. I'm my own receptionist, like I'm a secretary to my brain. And if I add coffee to it … If I write an hour or two hours in the morning then I can do whatever I want the rest of the day. I love doing it. Yes, I need to do it because I love to do it. Do you drink coffee? You must.

I do, and I kinda feel like I'm missing the boat. It's not the coffee you're drinking.
(Laughs) Well, it's been like that for many, many, many years. I remember saying to this woman I knew, "I just drink the coffee and then there's the jokes." She said, "Well, for you it is."

[Wright then started interviewing me for a bit. Let's skip ahead.]
Writing is thinking, really. It's thinking and you put it down. So thinking is amazing. Thinking is fun. I feel very grateful my career is [that] I just think. I make shit up. It's unbelievable. What were you gonna say? You were gonna say something.

I edit my text messages ...
My god! I was gonna bring that up and then I didn't! I like writing so much that when I send a text I write it the correct way. The guy receiving it, he doesn't give a shit. All I'm telling him is I'll meet him probably around 11, maybe 12. But I make sure that it's done in the right way.

Capitalization, punctuation.
Capitalization, none of this abbreviation, no "tku" thank you. F--- you, f--- you! I respect the words and I like actually writing the sentences even in a text.

When you're up there on stage your main goal is to get laughs. Is your personal life like that? Are you being funny all the time or can you have hour-long conversations with no joking?
Hanging out with my friends, I have no pressure of being funny, but all my friends are funny. I laugh so much, I laugh with my friends constantly. I mean, we talk about serious stuff, too, but I can't even remember having an hour conversation that was serious for an hour in my whole life. I remember being in Boston, we would drive to another city to do a show, three comedians, we'd drive, do the show and come back. The ride was better than the show. | MIKE WOLLSCHLAGER |



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TESTIMONIALS of SMALL MIRACLES

Adele, Age 75 "For many years, I have suffered from lower back pain and pain radiating down both of my legs to my feet from an accident. Every time I exercised or moved just the wrong way I'd have pain that would last for a long time. I couldn't even roll out of bed without extreme pain. After the third visit all of my pain was gone. It was my own little miracle. I was very impressed by the care but also by the fact that the doctors were knowledgeable and very personable. The staff was friendly and helpful and I would recommend their treatment to everyone with neck or back pain."

Jack, Age 37 "I was working as a Police officer in April when I was injured on the job, lost the strength in my left arm and hand and had a lot of pain in my neck and midback. I saw many Doctors for 6 months with no resolution to my problem, whether Physical Therapy, Steroids, Pain Medication, or Nerve Block. The Surgeon wanted to do a 3 level fusion on my neck as the last treatment option. I saw the ad in the paper and decided I didn't have anything to lose and to give it a try, but it was my last chance before getting surgery. After my second visit I had regained all of my strength in my left arm and hand and had minimal pain in my neck. My life has drastically improved."

Duane, Age 77 "I woke up one evening with severe pain going down my right leg and went to a Doctor who couldn't tell me what was wrong. He told me to go home, take a hot bath and in a week if it didn't go away to come back. I had an MRI showing a bulging disc in the lower spine, with arthritis and gout. A family member told me about the Deep-Tissue Laser Treatment®, and after the first session the pain lessened significantly. At the end of the visit I could move around great. By the 5th or 6th visit I had no more pain in my leg and lower back. I am extremely satisfied, my legs are stronger, and I am standing up straight. This has been a fantastic thing and it all happened in 4 to 5 weeks. If I could tell you anything it would be to not take pain killers or have surgery until you experience incredible **Deep-Tissue Laser Therapy".**

Surgeon has PERSONAL Experience!

Dr. Robert Morrow, a well-known, trusted orthopedic surgeon who had completed over 15,000 surgeries, said "I was suffering from shoulder pain for 6 months straight with no relief. I heard about laser treatment and after seeing and hearing many of my patient's stories, I did more research on the topic and found that the doctors and staff now using these **LiteCure® Lasers** people who think that surgery is their only option. I went to get treated and was amazed that it took away all of my pain. After 6 months of misery, I was relieved and I am now **Pain Free!** I know that orthopedic surgeons don't always fully understand the available alternatives to surgery and, as a result, many patients are sent through long, painful and costly procedures. There are many of you who have been through the process of using prescription medications and injections… with little or no relief. Physicians who recommend drugs are limited by their options, for treatment, so they continue to prescribe medications. I have found that this NE Spine and Disc Healing Protocol very effective at treating patients that have not responded to other procedures, even those who have already tried surgery. I concluded, to give patients the best possible care, there needs to be referrals provided to chronic pain patients so they can receive these unique therapies."

*To everyone whose condition warrants this treatment.
**While these results are typical individual results may vary.

Stress Relief

VINNIE BRAND DELIVERS LAUGHS AND STELLAR SERVICE AT HIS STRESS FACTORY COMEDY CLUB IN DOWNTOWN BRIDGEPORT

BY MIKE WOLLSCHLAGER



PHOTO: VINNIE BRAND'S STRESS FACTORY

Comedian DeRay Davis did six shows at The Stress Factory over a weekend in late July.

We've never seen this many options. The abundance of content and entertainment choices readily available for our consumption is growing every day. That's the reason we have recliners at movie theaters, and steak sandwiches and lobster rolls at ballparks. Business owners know they need to step their game up to stay competitive. Consumers win.

One of the newest entertainment options in Connecticut arrived with the May grand opening of Vinnie Brand's Stress Factory comedy club in Bridgeport. Brand, who opened the original Stress Factory in New Brunswick, New Jersey, almost three decades ago, made his presence known immediately. Jim Breuer, Gary Owen and Andrew Dice Clay headlined the new club's first three weekends, and Artie Lange, Billy Gardell and Sinbad took the stage in June.

But Brand knows it takes more than big-name talent to keep people coming back. "Everything we do starts with the phone call," Brand says. "I tell my staff, listen, when [customers] call you, it's gotta be a good experience. When they get there, it's gotta be good. Service has to be good. I'm trying to make people say, 'It wasn't just good, it was top to bottom beyond expectations.' "

In the mood to laugh on July 19, we headed to downtown Bridgeport, to the site of the old Playhouse on the Green on State Street, to catch DeRay Davis perform the first of six shows over four nights. From the beginning it's clear Brand's message is getting through. The staff, without exception, was personable, pleasant and attentive. Doors open two hours before showtime and lead to an exquisite open room with a high ceiling, black tables and chairs surrounded by a second-floor balcony overlooking a small stage against a brick backdrop.

Brand makes sure you don't have to wait for your enjoyable evening to begin. There are three giant screens on the wall behind the stage — a Cubs-Cardinals game was on during our visit. "When you come to the club, I want you to be entertained," Brand says. "In the pre-show moment, as soon as you sit down at the average comedy club you're just waiting for the show. At both of our clubs, when you sit down we're entertaining you, whether it's funny video clips, which we do every show, the roving video camera, which we do every show. In the hour beforehand, whatever the hot event of the day is, it's on those three big screens — we spent a lot of money on our A/V system."

One thing they haven't spent money on is a kitchen. The Stress Factory has a partnership with next-door neighbor Harlan Haus, whose chef and owner Stephen Lewandowski provides top-notch, pub-style food you'd never expect to find at a comedy club. According to Brand, the comics appreciate that as much as the customers. "Oh man, I thought [Davis] was gonna break my bank eating. … Normally a guy comes in, he eats whatever he eats. These guys are coming in and they're eating five times what they normally eat, because the food is so good." When he made that comment I couldn't help but ask about Lange. "Artie also ate a lot," Brand says. "But Artie was only there the one night so it didn't hurt us as bad. DeRay was digging in four nights in a row."

We opted for the Factory fries (seasoned curly fries with cheddar ale cheese sauce and short rib chili) and jerk chicken empanadas with Scotch bonnet aioli. Both were out of sight. "I had said that by August we would know if we were gonna build our own kitchen or not," Brand says. "It's not

necessary. He's too good." A cookie lava cake with ice cream capped off the meal perfectly. Desserts, coffee and the bar are handled in house by the Stress Factory.

We arrived early enough to finish our meal before the live show began. After the aforementioned funny video clips (think YouTube's greatest hits) and roving video camera (a few lucky folks in the audience become a good-natured punchline), Marshall Brandon took the stage. "By the time the first comic walks onstage, you're already laughing," Brand says. "You're already in a good mood. The comic's job is made easier by that."

Not that Brandon or Davis needed any help. Brandon delivered a solid set that was better than expected from an opener and Davis was masterful, churning out prepared material in addition to amusing crowd work and clearly off-the-cuff commentary. At one point, to prove he wasn't making things up, Davis handed his phone to a guy in the front row to show him recent text messages from his mother. He must have done 15 minutes on what happened to him that day.

"I've been to gigantic theaters, small theaters," Brand says. "You want to go see comedy? Go to a club. That's where it's more raw. It's more of what comedy should be. No one goes to a theater show and sees the comedian writing new stuff."

Brand says one thing the Bridgeport crowds need to adapt to that the New Brunswick crowds already know is the method for paying the bill. Most clubs drop the check during the final 15 minutes of the headliner's set. The Stress Factory does it at the end of the show. "It's miserable for the comedian," Brand says. "If you're a comedian, everyone's paying attention and all of a sudden half the room is paying a check. … Listen, comedy is not like music. If you don't hear the beginning of a song, you jump in, you know the song. You can't jump in post-premise and still get the joke."

Brand mentioned many times during our interview that he loves his customers, and he loves people. I brought up the recent morning when Chaz and AJ from WPLR gave out his cellphone number on the air. "Put my phone number in the article," Brand says. "You can tell people, listen, Vinnie Brand said he loves his customers. If you want to call him, here's the number. … Don't call me for stupid stuff. If you need to laugh, I'm your hookup."

VINNIE BRAND'S STRESS FACTORY
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September Fairs and Festivals

From oyster festivals to community celebrations to our award-winning agricultural fairs, there's no shortage of fun activities to take part in around Connecticut this September.

All information is subject to change. Check with event coordinators for more details, rain dates and other up-to-date information.

Sept. 7-9
Norwalk Oyster Festival
Veterans Memorial Park, Norwalk
seaport.org/oyster-festival
There will be oysters (of course) but also plenty of other foods from the International Food Court, plus arts and crafts, harbor tour cruises, prizes and giveaways, kids' games, rides and parades, and much more. Fri. 6-11 p.m., Sat. 11 a.m.-11 p.m., Sun. 11 a.m.-8 p.m. Regular admission $10-$12, seniors $10, 5-12 years $5, active duty military personnel free.

Septemberfest
Simsbury Meadows Performing Arts Center, Simsbury
simsburymeadowsmusic.com
Three days of family fun, food and entertainment. Friday is Country Music Night and will have a fireworks show; Saturday is Family Day, and Sunday is Oktoberfest. See website for schedule and admission.

Sept. 8
Hartbeat Music Festival
Mortensen Riverfront Plaza, Hartford
riverfront.org
New this year, a day-long festival featuring local and regional musicians. Noon-9 p.m. Free admission.

Lobster Festival
Chester Fairgrounds, Chester
chesterrotary.org
Choose lobster or steak (or both) for your dinner and enjoy live music. Limited seating; advance reservations are recommended. 4-10 p.m. Tickets: $35-$50.

Sept. 8
Pridefest 2018
Pratt Street, Hartford
hartfordpride.com
All are welcome to New England's largest pride festival. Continue the celebration with a Masquerade Glow Party at Infinity Music Hall ($15 admission for the after-party). Noon-6 p.m. Free admission.

Sept. 1-Oct. 14
Connecticut Renaissance Faire
Lebanon County Fairgrounds, Lebanon
ctfaire.com
Over seven weekends plus Labor Day and Columbus Day, visitors can step back into a 16th-century English village filled with knights and knaves, maidens and minstrels, jousters and jesters. The festival will be packed with comic and musical performers, medieval demonstrations and other interactive shows, as well as food and merchandise vendors. If medieval cosplay isn't your thing, each weekend has a different costume theme, from pirates to wizards to time travel, when anything goes. 10 a.m.-6 p.m. General admission $15; ages 7-15 $10; 6 and under free.



PHOTO: CONNECTICUT RENAISSANCE FAIRE

Sept. 14-16
Connecticut Firefighters Food Truck Fest
Avon Firefighters Fairgrounds, Avon
On Facebook
More than 20 of the state's best food trucks will be present, plus fireworks Saturday night, and Sunday is the Connecticut State Firefighters Parade with more than 100 fire trucks on site. Free admission and parking.

Newtown Arts Festival
Fairfield Hills Campus, Newtown
newtownartsfestival.com
A three-day festival to celebrate and support the arts. Friday night features a performance by former Billy Joel backing band the Lords of 52nd Street. Fri. 6-10:30 p.m., Sat. & Sun. 11 a.m.-5 p.m., Sat. night 6-10:30 p.m. Daytime admission: adults $5, ages 6-12 $3, under 5 free. Friday night concert: $25-$35.

Sept. 15-16
Garlic Festival
Olde Mistick Village, Mystic
oldemistickvillage.com
A celebration of all things garlic, plus more fresh produce from local farmers and an array of merchants, artisans and artists. Fri. 11 a.m.-7 p.m., Sat. 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Free admission and parking.

Sept. 16
Latin Music Festival
Paradise Green, Stratford
townofstratford.com
Hispanic Heritage of Stratford hosts this festival of food, music and dance. 1-6 p.m. Free admission.

Sept. 22
Black Sheep Oyster Festival
Black Sheep Pub, Niantic
discovereastlyme.com
Back for a fifth year, with an oyster-shucking contest and oyster-inspired menu items, plus live music, prizes and more. Noon-9 p.m. Free admission.

Youthtopia! A Family Event
Veterans Memorial Park, Griswold
griswoldyfs.com
More than 30 free family-friendly activities, games and more. 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Free admission.

Sept. 23
Simsbury Fly-In, Car Show & Food Truck Festival
Simsbury Airport, Simsbury
simsburyflyin.com
The region's largest show of its kind, with hundreds of cars and planes on display, is adding a major food truck festival to this year's activities. 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Free admission, parking is $10 per vehicle.

Sept. 29
Old Wethersfield Arts and Crafts Fair
Cove Park, Wethersfield
wethersfieldhistory.org
The park will be packed with local artists and their unique, handcrafted work. Proceeds support the Wethersfield Historical Society. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Admission: $7, under 12 free with adult.

Sept. 29-30
Hammonasset Festival
Guilford Fairgrounds, Guilford
hammonasset.org
This festival honors Native American art and culture with two days of celebration, education and entertainment. Admission: $5, 12 and under free.

Sept. 30
New England Chowdafest
Sherwood Island State Park, Westport
chowdafest.org
Attendees will help judge more than 40 chefs and restaurants from around New England to select the best chowder, soup and bisque. There will also be a ChowdaMex area and an Italian "Ciao"dafest section. 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Admission: adults $20, children 6-12 $5. Free parking.



PHOTO: CATHERINE AVALONE

Sept. 27-30
Durham Fair
durhamfair.com
Featured acts: Melissa Etheridge (Friday); Scotty McCreery (Saturday); USO Show Troupe (Sunday). General admission: $9-$14 (one day); $35 (four-day)

AGRICULTURAL FAIRS

From big to small, Connecticut's agricultural fairs are a fun and educational way to celebrate our state's farming communities. All events take place on town fairgrounds unless otherwise noted. Admission fees listed are adult single-day prices; many fairs also offer multi-day passes and discounted admission for seniors, children and/or active military personnel.

Aug. 31-Sept. 3
Haddam Neck Fair
haddamneckfair.com
General admission: $10

Woodstock Fair
woodstockfair.com
Featured acts: Billy Gilman, Steve Augeri (Journey), Wilson Phillips and Scotty McCreery. General admission: $12

Sept. 1-3
Goshen Fair
goshenfair.org
General admission: $10

Sept. 6-9
Hebron Harvest Fair
hebronharvestfair.org
General admission: $13 (Thu. $1)

North Haven Fair
northhaven-fair.com
General admission: $10 (Thu. $5)

Wapping Fair, South Windsor
wappingfair.org
General admission: $8 (Thu. free)

Sept. 7-9
Bethlehem Fair
bethlehemfair.org
General admission: $9

Ledyard Fair
ledyardfair.org
General admission: $9

Sept. 8
Meriden Grange Fair
meridengrange.org
10 a.m.–8 p.m.; free admission

Sept. 13-16
Four Town Fair, Somers
fourtownfair.com
General admission: $6; weekend pass $25
Featured acts: Truck Stop Troubadours (Thursday); LA's BackStage Pass (Friday); Studio Two, a Beatles tribute, Aquanett, an '80s tribute (Saturday); The Whiskey Rebels (Sunday)



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Jonathan Aranow, M.D.

Weighing In

Middlesex Hospital's Center for Weight Loss Surgery in Middletown can help patients reduce the risk and severity of their weight-related problems and improve their quality of life.

Weight loss surgery is sometimes the best option for patients when they've tried more conservative ways to control weight and failed. Surgery options can include gastric bypass, Lapband™ and sleeve surgery. The da Vinici robot assisted gastric bypass surgery is a minimally invasive option that provides the benefits of traditional weight loss surgery, but can mean smaller incisions, faster recovery times and shorter hospital stays.

Weight loss surgery is only for those diagnosed with clinically severe or morbid obesity and may not be right for everyone. Doctors will review your medical history to determine if it is the best option for you.

Patients must meet specific requirements before they are considered for an evaluation. These based on guidelines established by the National Institutes of Health.

Morbid obesity is defined as:

- Having a body mass index (BMI) of greater than 40 or a BMI of 35 accompanied by other health issues
- Having documented failure in several medically supervised weight reduction program within the last two years
- Being between the ages of 18 and 65 (with some exceptions)
- Having a long history of obesity
- Having no current issues with drug or alcohol abuse
- Having no serious psychiatric illness that would impair someone's ability to follow a weight loss program

Morbid obesity is a serious, chronic disease that affects more than 25 percent of American adults and 14 percent of American children. Every day, more than 1,000 people in the United States will die from obesity and related health conditions. People who are obese also have an increased risk of developing diabetes, heart disease and respiratory illnesses.

Middlesex Hospital's Center for Weight Loss Surgery is an accredited center, designated by the American Society of Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery for its demonstrated track record of favorable outcomes following bariatric surgery procedures, a designation that gives patients extra peace of mind.

The center recognizes that having weight loss surgery is a big decision. In addition to providing high quality medical care, the center facilitates support groups. This gives patients a chance to gain insight from a dietitian and psychologist before having surgery. It also allows them to connect with other patients after surgery.

For more information, or to find a weight loss surgeon, visit www.middlesexhospital.org or call 860-358-2850.

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Sept. 14-16
Berlin Fair
ctberlinfair.com
Featured acts: Aquanett, an '80s tribute (Friday); Physical Graffiti, a Led Zeppelin tribute, The Machine, a Pink Floyd tribute (Saturday). General admission: $12

Sept. 15
Simsbury Grange Agricultural Fair
10 a.m.-3 p.m.; free admission
simsburygrange.org

Sept. 15-16
Orange Country Fair
orangectfair.com
General admission: $8 (Fri. free)

Sept. 21-23
Guilford Fair
guilfordfair.org
General admission: $10; $25 for 3-day pass
Featured acts: Dirty Deeds, an AC/DC tribute (Friday); Morgan Wallen (Saturday); Truck Stop Troubadours (Sunday)

Oct. 5-7
Harwinton Fair
harwintonfair.com
General admission: $8

Portland Fair
portlandfair.com
General admission: $10

Oct. 12-14
Riverton Fair
rivertonfair.org
General admission: $7

LOCAL FAIRS & FESTIVALS

Many towns hold annual fairs aimed at fostering a sense of community for their residents. Admission is generally free. Check the event websites for more information.

Sept. 1
Colebrook Fair
colebrookfair.weebly.com
Town Center, Colebrook

Sept. 8
WestFest
On Facebook
Town Green, West Haven

Sept. 15
Watertown Fall Festival
watertownctrecreation.com
Veterans Memorial Park, Watertown



PHOTO: ARNOLD GOLD

Sept. 7-9
East Haven Fall Festival
facebook.com/ehfallfest
Town Green, East Haven

Sept. 16
Celebrate Mansfield Festival
downtownstorrsfestival.org
Betsy Paterson Square, Mansfield

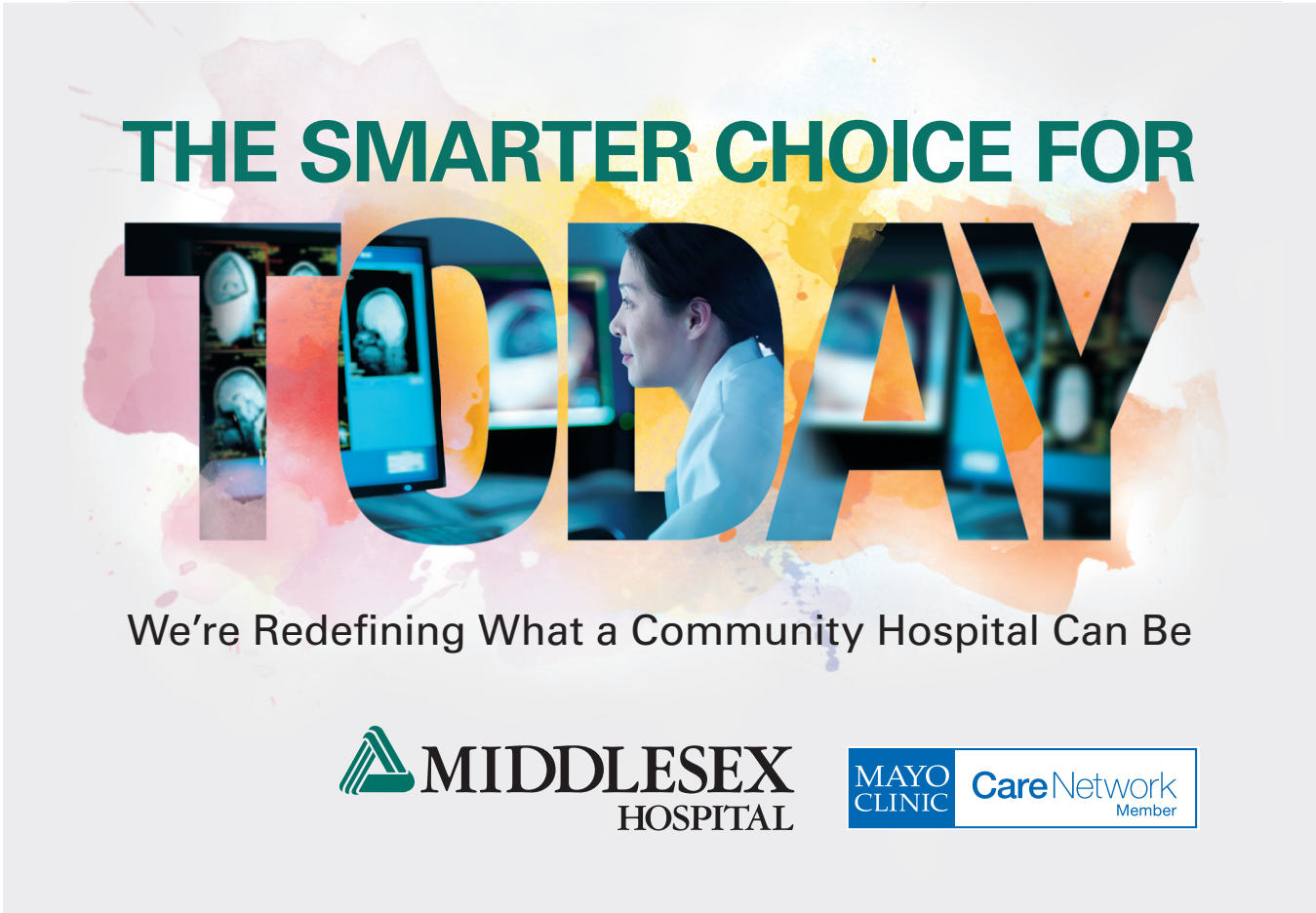
Sept. 17
Celebrate Tolland Festival
tolland.org
Recreation Center, Tolland

Sept. 21-22
Lisbon Fall Festival
lisbonfallfestival.weebly.com
Lisbon Community Center, Lisbon

Sept. 23
Seymour Pumpkin Festival
seymourpumpkinfestival.com
French Memorial Park, Seymour

Sept. 28-30
Apple Festival
cityofwesthaven.com
First Congregational Church, West Haven Green

Sept. 30
Fall Fest 2018
woodburyparksandrec.org
Main Street South, Woodbury



A New Discovery

WITH FORMER BRIDGEPORT MAYOR BILL FINCH AT THE HELM, THE DISCOVERY MUSEUM BLASTS OFF INTO A NEW ERA AFTER 60 YEARS

BY JANIE ROSMAN

Bill Finch's enthusiasm is contagious as he walks through Bridgeport's Discovery Museum and Planetarium and greets visitors.

On a recent tour, we encounter a parent with a camera, who is coaxing her young daughter up the steps into a model of the front of a big yellow school bus that is part of an exhibit. "Here, follow me," Finch smiles. The little one is soon happily behind the wheel. "How did you do that?" her mother asks Finch.

Drawn to the museum when he was growing up, the former Bridgeport mayor now has an office in the building. It's the perfect niche for the museum's new executive director, who received the U.S. EPA National Climate Leadership Award in 2015 while mayor of Bridgeport, was a co-chairman of the U.S. Conference of Mayors Climate Protection Task Force, and is a visiting climate fellow at the Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government in Albany.

More than 65,000 people annually visit the museum through school and individual trips, educational outreach and public programs to see its exhibits that are colorful, fun and aim to excite kids about STEM (science, technology, engineering and math).

During his eight years as Bridgeport's chief executive, Finch pushed for the city to embrace environmental sustainability and move to a so-called green economy that would attract a new generation of skilled labor. He is continuing that mission as the head of the museum, a position he assumed in January. He aims to increase attendance at the museum, boost its social media presence and coordinate staff to visit schools and discuss STEM subjects. He is also creating new exhibits and refining existing ones, as well as highlighting critical issues such as climate change, key technology such as circuitry, robotics, photonics and more.

One exhibit that will be updated is devoted to Gustave Whitehead, the Bridgeport-based aviator who some believe flew a plane in 1901, two years ahead of the Wright brothers. Finch says it's important to present objective information about Whitehead's contributions to aviation history and let the public form its own decisions.

In July, the state's bond commission approved nearly $2 million for improvements, upgrades and repairs. "With the funding we recently received from the state, we can build on our success and cement the museum's role as a STEM education hub for the city and the region," Finch says.

COOL THINGS TO SEE AND DO

Unlike at most museums, visitors are encouraged to touch everything. "There's nothing better than the authentic experience of knocking things over and screaming as loudly as you can and picking it up," says a smiling Finch, who took the reins at the museum in early 2017.

Build objects from blocks and watch how an earthquake's movement impacts them, explore circuits and sensors and more at *Dare to Discover*. Race carts to the bottom of a track and learn why one accelerates more quickly than the other. Cut a piece of paper along dotted lines, follow the folds and watch the helicopter you make fly to the top of the wind tunnel at *Get Physical*. Shoot hoops against a twisted backboard, lift your friends with a lever or hoist yourself with a pulley.



Former Bridgeport mayor and new executive director of the Discovery Museum Bill Finch demonstrates a wind turbine machine. PHOTO: BRIAN A. POUNDS

A recent partnership with Energize CT, *Energy Network*, lets kids explore activities that show what energy is and ways to harness, use and conserve it. Many of us know about energy generated by solar panels, water and windmills, but did you know it can be made from earth?

Drive the lunar rover around a video moon or make the astronaut moonwalk, then take your picture in the Apollo 11 spacesuit at *MoonBase Discovery*. "I think science museums carry the spirit of the 1960s, when President Kennedy said we'd send a man safely to the moon and back," Finch says.

Science on a Sphere is an interactive, room-size display developed by NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) researchers that projects data from numerous databases — changing climate and oceans, names of cities, effects of tsunamis, coral reef risks, green carbon (carbon stored in plant life), worldwide flight patterns and more — onto a 5-foot-diameter globe.

"Here, look at this," Finch gestures. Tiny yellow specks — representing some of the 87,000 daily worldwide flights — move east from the Americas to Europe, Africa and Asia. "The United States will become dark at midnight when fewer airplanes are leaving," he says. Six hours of simulated time later, the yellow specks begin moving west again, as dawn arrives in the Americas.

LEARNING ROCKET SCIENCE

Two grant-funded, weekly programs aim to bring STEM to students in Bridgeport schools and six surrounding suburbs.

Mighty STEM Girls introduces fourth-graders to the lives and careers of female STEM innovators and offers lessons that lets them experience STEM careers. Through separate grants, STEM Accelerators: Future Innovators, an advanced curriculum for fifth-graders and older, covers a range of STEM topics. Students learn

coding, 3-D printing and design, astronomy, biology, physics, chemistry and more.

Through a five-year, $500,000 grant from NASA, museum staff developed *Discover NASA*, a rocketry curriculum for K-12. Museum staff teach students in grades K-8 at the adjacent Discovery Interdistrict Magnet School about space exploration, laws of motion and space science using age-appropriate lessons for each grade. "Classes at the school and here at the museum demystify NASA and make space exploration more understandable," Finch says. The museum also runs a high school-level rocketry club, funded by the NASA grant.

"People don't realize it was an engineering challenge to get to the moon in 10 years," says David Mestre, manager of STEM learning programs at the planetarium and a teacher within the program. "These kids are learning how an airplane flies. We put the younger ones on a yoga ball with their arms outstretched and show them what it means when the airplane pitches up or down, and they yaw and roll."

"Through our programs, kids demonstrate that they are capable of the same deep scientific thought and inquiry as adults. We're trying to cultivate that interest so that our students see STEM careers as a tangible and exciting reality," says Sarah Tropp-Pacelli, the museum's director of STEM learning programs. "Working with them week after week, my favorite thing to see is students who show they're not afraid of science."

Part of *Discover NASA* included partnering with the University of Bridgeport and CATO, Connecticut's sport rocketry club, to form an enrichment program for high school students. In addition to meeting NASA's need to engage, inspire, educate and then employ, Mestre says "it's a pipeline entry point to meet the needs of future contractors looking to fill STEM jobs."

Kathleen O'Brady, a NASA certification systems engineer, visited the museum as a student on a field trip with a Norwalk elementary school. She was so inspired by presentations in both the Henry B. duPont III Planetarium and Challenger Learning Center, Finch says, that she now works in Florida with contractors to develop spacecraft to fly NASA astronauts to the International Space Station and home safely. "They don't fly unless she says it's OK to fly," Mestre says.

COMING UP

Discovery has invited O'Brady to discuss her career and early interest in STEM at its 60th anniversary jubilee *Rediscovering Discovery* on Oct. 20. The event will honor the legacy of local Junior League women, whose 1958 vision incorporated, founded and opened the museum, back when it was called the Museum of Art, Science, and Industry (MASI). Tickets are $125 and can be purchased online at discoverymuseum.org.

"We still have a long way to go toward having more young girls and boys see themselves growing into a career in science," Finch says.

MARK THE CALENDAR

SPOOKTACULAR: Exploding Jack-o'-lanterns, a mad science laboratory, live science demonstrations (featuring a Tesla coil), and the famous Pumpkin Chunkin' exhibition (catapults and trebuchets hurling pumpkins long distances) are part of the sixth annual Spooktacular on Oct. 27 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Costumes are encouraged.

THANKFUL FRIDAY!: The museum's second annual Thankful Friday! is its answer to Black Friday. Kids and their families can craft handmade gifts for loved ones, decorate ornaments for patients at St. Vincent's Medical Center, create holiday greeting cards for veterans and servicemen, and more.

SNOWFLAKE FESTIVAL: On Dec. 29-30, kids receive a pair of snowflake glasses that can be used scavenger-hunt style with different-colored bulbs in the galleries. Make snowflakes in the Energy Garage and watch live science demonstrations.

discoverymuseum.org





Before There Was *Hamilton*

Ten years ago, **Lin-Manuel Miranda**, director **Thomas Kail** and many others from the creative team behind *Hamilton* had their first Broadway hit with their Tony and Grammy Award-winning *In the Heights*. The pleasure of that musical — which began as a student production when Miranda was a sophomore at Wesleyan University in Middletown and later developed at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center in Waterford — was splendidly on display this summer at West Hartford's Playhouse on Park.

To celebrate the show's 10th anniversary, Ghostlight Records is releasing a three-LP soundtrack exclusively through Barnes & Noble, marking the first time the show has been offered on vinyl. The set features newly remastered audio, 21 tracks and 90 minutes of music, and a 12-inch-by-12-inch booklet with full lyrics, original Broadway show photos, a synopsis and a liner note from Kail. An MP3 download card is also included.

"[The anniversary] acts as a reminder of the things you're proud of with people you love," says Kail, 41. "That's what this show represents for me, especially in a week where I can tell people I'm working with some of these same collaborators on a completely new project."

Kail is referring to the limited television series he will direct and co-produce with Miranda based on the lives and careers of choreographer-director Bob Fosse and Broadway legend Gwen Verdon. **Andy Blankenbuehler** will choreograph the series coming to FX next year, with Sam Rockwell and Michelle Williams attached as series leads. "One of the things that brings so much joy in my life is that I've been able to keep some of the most inspiring, thoughtful, kind human beings — who also happen to be exceptionally talented — in my life. The chance to sit with them and take a moment to reflect back and share what was for so many of us our first Broadway experience is something I'm soaking in now.

"I feel in many ways the DNA for *Hamilton* — and a lot of other things we made [since] — are very evident in *In the Heights*. If you listen and watch that show it's abundantly clear that it's written by Lin-Manuel Miranda [and orchestrated by Alex Lacamoire and Bill Sherman], and the fact that the spirit became the fuel for us is apparent."

Recent news is that Warner Bros. has bought the rights to the film version of *In the Heights* for $50 million and is expected to shoot next summer. **Jon M. Chu** (*Step Up* franchise) is attached to direct. "I don't have anything to do with the movie, but I'm a huge cheerleader for it and can't wait to buy a ticket."

More locally, theater fans can try for tickets to what was the creative team's next big project after *In the Heights* — *Hamilton*. The touring show plays The Bushnell in Hartford Dec. 11-30, shortly after Kail, Miranda, Blankenbuehler and music director **Alex Lacamoire** accept Kennedy Center Honors for their work on *Hamilton*. They will receive the award on Dec. 2., and the event will be broadcast Dec. 26.



FROM BROADWAY TO HOLLYWOOD

Cynthia Erivo was a sensation in the Broadway revival of *The Color Purple,* for which she won the Tony Award for her performance as the downtrodden yet triumphant Celie. Since then the British actor-singer has launched a film career with several movies about to be released and a major one to begin filming in the fall based on the life of Harriet Tubman. But first she will be performing in concert Sept. 16 at 7:30 p.m. at the Ridgefield Playhouse — and it may be the last chance to see this incredible singer perform live for a while.

What will she be singing? "With shows like this I tend to want to do songs that bring me joy and a look into the kind of music I listen to," Erivo says. "I tend to do some Aretha Franklin, like 'Natural Woman.' I like rock like Aerosmith's 'I Don't Want to Miss a Thing' and Annie Lennox's 'Why.'"



PHOTO: BENEDICT EVANS

On the front burners blazing are a string of films this year and next, including *Widows* with Liam Neeson, *Bad Times at the El Royale*, starring Chris Hemsworth, Jon Hamm and Jeff Bridges, *Chaos Walking* with a screenplay by Charlie Kaufman, and *Needle in a Timestack* with Orlando Bloom and Leslie Odom.

And then there's the big one: *Harriet*, filming this fall for a 2019 release, in which she plays the former slave and American abolitionist and political activist. Erivo will sing some gospel spirituals in the film.

"But I'm never going to leave my live performing behind," she says. In fact, one dream theater project is in the "talking stage," and she's also chatting up her friends, the Oscar, Grammy and Tony Award-winning composing team of Justin Paul and Benj Pasek (*Dear Evan Hansen*, *The Greatest Showman*). "I'd love to do a new musical, too."

ridgefieldplayhouse.org

CHILD'S PLAY



Bess Wohl likes challenges. Several years ago the playwright gave herself the assignment to write a play with almost no dialogue, and that turned into the Off-Broadway hit *Small Mouth Sounds*. Now she's taken on the adage of "never work with children or animals" and, though there are no animals in her new play *Make Believe*, there are four children as main characters. The play premieres Sept. 6-30 at Hartford Stage, which commissioned the work.

"There are plays that have the theatrical convention of adults playing children, but I was really interested in putting [actual] children on stage," Wohl tells me from her Brooklyn, New York, home where she was six days away from giving birth to her third child. "But I didn't want them in a 'kids' play or where they are cutesy comic relief or where they are on stage just for a few minutes. I wanted to see if I could put them in an adult play and have them tell an adult story for an audience of adults."

Wohl, a grad of the Yale School of Drama along with the show's director, **Jackson Gay**, knew there were capable kid actors out there carrying musicals such as *Annie* and *Matilda*. "And it happens in films all the time. But for the stage this is a huge experiment."

There are also older actors in the 90-minute work playing the children's characters as adults in the two distinct time periods of *Make Believe*. But the show opens with the kids as these four siblings — ages 5 to 10 — playing "pretend" in the attic playroom. "I hope the audience takes on the role of detective in trying to understand what's happening in these children's lives through the games they play. It's a play about memory, trauma and time passing and really deals with how our childhoods do — or do not — live with us for the rest of our lives, what has changed and what has stayed the same."

And will her next play have animals? "The next play, I think, is just going to be a pony alone on stage," she laughs.

hartfordstage.org

HAVE YOU HEARD ...

… Connecticut will have its first trans-identifying director at one of its Tony Award-winning theaters. **Will Davis**, artistic director of Chicago's American Theater Company, will stage Lucas Hnath's *A Doll's House, Part Two* at New Haven's Long Wharf Theatre May 1-29.

… *The Inheritance*, **Matthew Lopez**'s two-part epic play that many are calling the next *Angels in America*, is moving this fall from its Young Vic run to the West End of London. But few know that Hartford Stage commissioned the work and it was written when Lopez was an Aetna playwriting fellow when his play *Reverberation* was premiering at the theater. Though Hartford Stage did not further produce *The Inheritance*, its associate artistic director **Elizabeth Williamson** is the dramaturg for the London productions, staged by top-tier director **Stephen Daldry**. The show is destined for New York in the not-too-distant future.

… Before you see *Hamilton* at The Bushnell in Hartford in December, you might check out my talk so you'll get the most out of your investment of a theater ticket. I'll be presenting *Ten Things to Know Before You See Hamilton* at Hartford's Mark Twain House & Museum on Sept. 13 at 7 p.m.

Frank Rizzo has covered the arts-entertainment scene in Connecticut since disco reigned in the '70s, including nearly 34 years writing for the Hartford Courant. *Email him at FrRiz@aol.com. Follow him on Twitter @ShowRiz.*



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Savage Garden

CARNIVOROUS PLANTS THRIVE IN CONNECTICUT'S BOGGY POCKETS, AND CAN FLOURISH IN YOUR HOME

BY KEVIN FITZGERALD

PHOTOS BY DAVID GUMBART / THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

Sundews *(above)* are one of the three basic types of carnivorous plants found in the wild in Connecticut's bogs. The plant's bright hairs, tipped with glistening, gluey droplets, attract and capture its prey *(shown in inset)*.

When I tell friends that 14 species of carnivorous plants grow wild in Connecticut, they go into states of low-key shock and denial. The general feeling seems to be that animal-eating plants don't belong in Connecticut. They're too exotic; they're properly found in tropical rain forests or on remote islands.

I remember my first sight of a bog studded with carnivorous plants in northeastern Connecticut. The bog, a mat of interwoven sphagnum (peat moss) spread across the surface of a body of still water, looked deceptively solid. The mat was artfully arrayed with various plant species, all of them beautiful and strange. Pitcher plants were garishly obvious, each like a cluster of squat, green-and-crimson cobras poised to strike. Their partners in crime, the jewel-like sundews, sparkled and lurked in the moss below. The whole looked like an aerial view of an alien world.

The 14 species of carnivorous plants in Connecticut are broken down into three basic types and designs: pitcher plants (one species), sundews (two) and bladderworts (11). Living alongside one another, pitcher plants and sundews are textbook examples of the different ways in which most carnivorous plants do the same jobs, those being false advertising, trapping insects and digesting them. Victims include ants, dragonflies, beetles and flies.

Back to bogs for a moment. These are bodies of still water with inlets but no outlets other than evaporation. Tannic acid leached out of dead plants builds up over time. The acidic milieu prevents the growth of fungi and decay bacteria, which normally would break down dead organic mass into nutrients vital for plants, especially nitrates and phosphates. Concentrated in the state's northwest and northeast corners, bogs are often difficult to access with sometimes dangerous terrain. The Nature Conservancy, which owns Beckley Bog, a national natural landmark in Norfolk, warns that its bog is a fragile habitat with "extremely poor footing."

Plants that live in bogs must seek elsewhere what they lack. Carnivorous plants get around the hurdle by digesting

insects from which they absorb animal phosphates and nitrates. Thus they are able to colonize a hostile environment off limits to most plants. But how do pitcher plants and sundews attract and snag insects?

Pitcher plants can be up to 8 inches tall, usually growing in clusters from a single root. The vase-like pitchers are modified leaves, rolled up and partly open at the top, green but decked out in vein-like patterns of bright red around the opening. To augment its lethal charms, a pitcher secretes droplets of nectar around the top spout that smell like violets. When an insect flies in or climbs up, attracted by the colors and aromas, its doom is sealed. It follows the bright red streaks and squiggles down into the funnel of the pitcher. The inner wall is slick as wax and covered with downward-pointing hairs to prevent escape. The trapped insect falls into a broth of rainwater and digestive juices.

Sundews are clusters of modified leaves, the whole assemblage about an inch across. Each lentil-sized leaf is covered with a pelt of bright hairs, each hair tipped with a ruby droplet of glue full of digestive juices. The droplets are both traps and stomachs. Insects, enticed by the color and sparkle of glue drops, crawl or fly in to investigate, then end up entangled in one or more drops. The insect struggles, touching more gluey hairs and becoming even more hopelessly mired. Digestion soon follows.

I haven't seen or photographed bladderworts. Briefly, they are aquatic plants that are either attached to the bottom of a pool or floating freely. Their weaponry is held beneath the surface and consists of tiny bladders, hence the common name. The bladders are kept closed and controlled by a trip hair. When some small water animal swims too close and trips the hair, the bladder opens and sucks in water and the animal, to digest at leisure.

For those who want to see carnivorous plants more often than an occasional bog visit, you can add them to your indoor or outdoor garden. (See sidebar, "Caring for Carnivorous Plants.") Just be sure to get them from a nursery or garden center and not from a native bog!

The miracle of these little green death traps is that they do their macabre jobs so well, are masterpieces of adaptation, and, with their insolent colors and spun-glass delicacy, are beautiful to behold.



WHERE CAN YOU SEE CARNIVOROUS PLANTS?

- Black Spruce Bog in Mohawk State Forest, West Goshen; 860-424-3000 (Department of Energy and Environmental Protection)
- Flanders Nature Center, Whittemore Sanctuary, Woodbury, 203-263-3711, flanders@flandersnaturecenter.com
- Pachaug State Forest, Rhododendron Sanctuary, Voluntown, 860-424-3000
- White Memorial Foundation, Litchfield, 860-567-0857, infowhitememorialcc.org

RECOMMENDED READING

Bogs of the Northeast by Charles W. Johnson, Vermont's state naturalist from 1978 to 2000. (University Press of New England, 1985).

ORGANIZATIONS

- Connecticut Botanical Society, ct-botanical-society.org, 860-246-2077
- New England Carnivorous Plant Society, necps.org
- New England Wildflower Society, newenglandwild.org, 508-877-6553
- The Nature Conservancy, Connecticut Chapter, nature.org, 203-568-6270





JEFF HOLCOMBE/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



Pitcher plants grow in clusters from a single root. Their bright red leaves and sweet-smelling nectar lure insects into the plant's funnel.





Caring for Carnivorous Plants

Carnivorous greenery make fine houseplants. Chances are, a well-stocked nursery or garden center near you has a selection, most likely pitcher plants and Venus flytraps. Two good destinations are Logee's family-owned nursery in Danielson and Van Wilgen's Garden Center in North Branford. To care for a carnivorous plant, it's important to understand they are plants much like any other, and not some hybrid of plant and animal. Pitcher plants, sundews and Venus flytraps all use photosynthesis, have roots and share most other features with plants. Trapping and consuming insects merely supplements what are otherwise normal plant life processes. The proper way to look at caring for a carnivorous plant is to see it as only a slightly exotic, but otherwise ordinary plant.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Well-drained garden plot or pot with drainage hole
- Perlite or sand
- Peat moss
- Distilled water or filtered water
- Spray bottle
- Feed insects (indoor plants only)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Plant the carnivorous plant in a well-drained location or a pot with a drainage hole. Fill either the pot or the garden bed with a mixture of one-third perlite or sand and two-thirds peat moss.
2. Water the plant frequently using distilled or filtered water. Carnivorous plants need moist soil, and are sensitive to chemical contaminants.
3. Carnivorous plants need a lot of light to grow well, but many of them can't tolerate too much heat. If you have a bright windowsill that gets the morning sun, your plants will grow well there. If you don't, you can use artificial light. Hang a standard fluorescent light 12 inches above your plants, and keep it on about 14 hours per day in the summer and eight hours a day in the winter. Fluorescent lights help your plants to grow, but won't cause them to overheat.
4. Mist your plants with a spray bottle once or twice per day, or more if the humidity is unusually low.
5. Feed your plant if it resides primarily indoors. Most carnivorous plants require one or two flies about once a month. Outdoor plants feed themselves. Be warned: Only feed your carnivorous plants insects that are part of their wild diet, such as flies, gnats, mites and sowbugs. Some large species even consume small frogs. Never feed the plant meat products.
6. If you keep your plants outdoors, be sure to bring them inside during the colder weather. Carnivorous plants usually come from humid, warm climates, and no variety performs well in dry conditions, cold or freezing winters such as those in Connecticut.

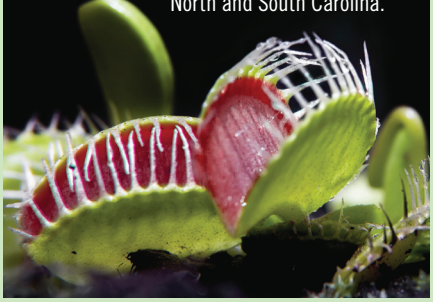


Bladderworts *(below)* are aquatic; an underwater network of bladders captures animals when they brush against a trigger hair. Only the plant's flower is visible above the water's surface *(inset)*.

THE VENUS FLY TRAP

The most iconic carnivorous plant in the country, and probably the world, is the Venus flytrap, some of whose leaves, designed along the lines of leghold traps, shut on unsuspecting insects — and sometimes small vertebrates such as frogs — that crawl onto the inner surfaces of the trap leaves. Touching several trigger hairs on the inner leaf causes it to close on the unfortunate insect.

But you'll never see a Venus flytrap in the wild in Connecticut. They're only found in a small area by the ocean in longleaf pine habitats in the coastal plain and sandhills, straddling the state lines of North and South Carolina.



SERGEI ALESHIN/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



GIANT STEPS

by DOUGLAS S. MALAN

New York's NFL Legacy Began With a Game Played in New Britain

HARD-NOSED AND HARD-HITTIN', New Britain has long been a factory town that loves its football. It couldn't be any other way in the birthplace of Walter Camp, Yale man and father of American football.

The high school team receives the most attention, and its legacy defines Willow Brook Park. But the city park's history includes another remarkable footnote — it played host to the New York Giants' inaugural game on Oct. 4, 1925. Yes, the NFL blue blood that plays in front of a packed stadium of more than 80,000 diehards, the franchise peppered with legends such as Lawrence Taylor, Michael Strahan, Frank Gifford and Stamford's Andy Robustelli, the team with four Super Bowl championships, had its professional beginnings on a field in New Britain.

This month, the National Football League kicks off its 99th season, with its primetime matchups routinely the most-watched events on television. But in 1925 the NFL wasn't an entertainment behemoth; it was an afterthought compared to college football and a struggling startup like any other. The New York Giants were just another team, not the venerable franchise of today, but big-city exposure was key to the NFL's future. The man who gambled on the venture was a bookmaker (a lawful occupation at the time) named Tim Mara. He paid just $500 to create the New York Giants, an amount equivalent to about $7,000 today. Measure that against the $700 million expansion fee Houston Texans owner Bob McNair paid to join the NFL in 2002.

Mara and the Giants — legally known as the New York Football Giants to distinguish themselves from the New York Giants baseball team — arrived on the scene as part of a 20-team league in 1925 when franchises were scattered throughout middle America and the East in places like Pottsville, Pennsylvania; Rock Island, Illinois; Duluth, Minnesota; and Hammond, Indiana. And in those rag-tag early days, it wasn't surprising when teams went belly-up in the middle of the season.

The NFL was fighting a public relations battle and franchise owners were losing at the gates. Many considered professional football an ignoble pursuit in the 1920s, filled with bloodthirsty mercenaries and mindless violence (sound familiar?). Somehow there was more glory and prestige in the college game, and when players graduated they were expected

RETROCLIPART/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



NEW BRITAIN IS READY FOR GIANTS

Greatest Aggregation of Players to Be in Game Tomorrow

New York Giants.

Player	College	No.	Pos.
Nash, Capt.	Cor.-Rut.	18	L.E.
Millsted,	Yale	24	L.E.
Carney,	Navy	23	L.G.
Alexander,	Syracuse	20	C.
Williams,	Lafayette	25	R.G
McGinley,	Penn.	10	R.T.
Bomar,	Vannderbilt	7	R.E.
Hendrian,	Pitts.-Princ'n	5	Q.
Haines,	Penn. State	1	L.H.
Benkert,	Rutgers	2	R.H.
McBride,	Syracuse	16	F.

Utility Players.

Bedner,	Lafayette	3	B.
Brennan,	Villanova-La.	6	Li.
Smith,	College Point	8	B.
Brugonne,	Syracuse	9	B.
McIntosh,	Alabama Tech	11	Li.
Parnell,	Colgate-Alleg'y	12	Li.
Nordstrom,	Trinity	14	Li.
Walbridge,	Fordham-La.	15	C.
Reynolds,	Georgia Tech	17	E.
Morris,	Cornell	19	Li.
Jappe,	Syracuse	22	E.

All-New Britain.

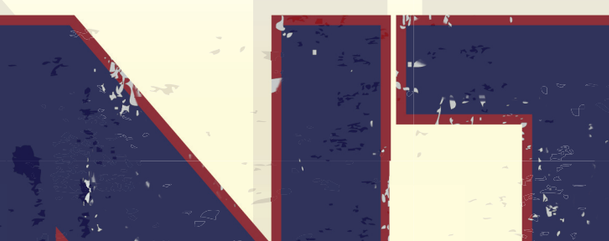
Player	No.	Position
Bean,	25	left end
O'Neil	21	left tackle
Abraham	13	left guard
Rogers, Capt.	1	center
Humphries	16	right guard
Donlin	24	right tackle
Warner	22	right end
Radzewech	2	quarterback
Barnikow	3	left halfback
Zehrer	20	right halfback
Bowers	6	fullback

Utility Players.

Steudtner	4	fullback
Connelly	8	end
Blanchard	9	end
Vose	19	lineman
Smith	23	lineman
Swem	10	backfield

The All-New Britain football team is ready and waiting for to-

Crack New York Giants Who Play New Britain



Front row, left to right—Bomar, McGinley, Williams, Alexander, Carney, Millstead and Jappe. Back row—Vidal, Benkert, McBride and Haines.

ALL-AMERICA STARS PLAY NEW BRITAIN

New York Giants Composed of Former College Brilliants.

BOB FOLWELL COMES WITH VISITING TEAM

Dailey Signs New Players to Strengthen Nutmeg State Eleven.

AT NEW BRITAIN.

All-New Britains		New York Giants
Bean	le	Nash
O'Neil	lt	Millstead
Duily	lg	Carney
Rogers, Capt.	c	Alexander
Humphries	rg	Williams
Donlin	rt	McGinley
Warner	re	Bomar
Radzewich	qb	Hendrian
Barnikow	lhb	Haines
Zahrer	rhb	Benkert
Yarnell	fb	McBride

Game starts at 2:30 o'clock.

(Special to The Courant)
New Britain, October 3.
With a rushline averaging 192 pounds and two complete backfields, the New York Giants will oppose the All-New Britains tomorrow after-

No photographs of the game between the New York Football Giants and All-New Britain are known to exist; newspapers reported on the match-up, but a visit from the fledgling NFL team was hardly considered major news.

The Giants are pictured in a photo published in the *Hartford Courant*. At far left, the *New Britain Herald* lists the team rosters. Both articles appeared on Oct. 3, 1925, one day before the game at Willow Brook Park.

COURTESY OF THE *NEW BRITAIN HERALD* AND THE *HARTFORD COURANT*



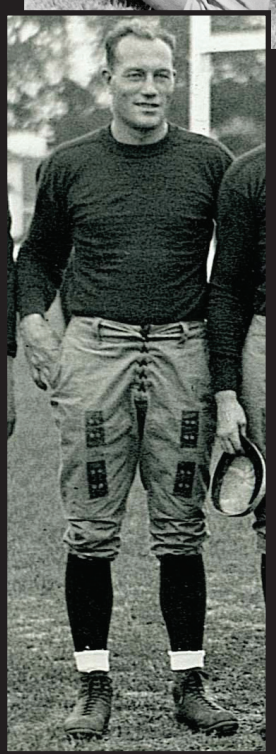
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TEST YOUR FOOTBALL KNOWLEDGE

The New York Giants are the fourth-oldest franchise in the NFL. Can you name the three oldest, including their original locations and team names? *(See answers on page 41)*







TOP: By far the biggest star on the Willow Brook Park field that day in 1925 was the Giants' do-it-all extraordinaire Jim Thorpe, shown here in 1927.

CENTER: Former Yale standout Raymond "Ducky" Pond coached the All-New Britain squad against the Giants.

BOTTOM: Century Milstead was one of the many gridiron stars the New York Giants brought to New Britain in 1925.

TOP PHOTO: JIM THORPE ASSOCIATION

to become teachers and professors, coaches of amateur teams, or men of industry — not pro football players.

But Mara believed in the NFL's potential and New York fans' ability to deliver a healthy return on his investment. That required a winning team, which he created immediately.

Head coach Bob Folwell, a successful college coach in the East, oversaw the Giants' numerous stars, including former All-Americans Century Milstead (Yale), Rhett Bomar (Vanderbilt), Art Carney (Navy), Bob Nash (Rutgers) and Joe Alexander (Syracuse).

The Giants' most famous player on the field was the estimable Jim Thorpe, considered one of the finest athletes in sports history as a college football All-American, professional football player, Olympic decathlete and pentathlete, and professional baseball player. Though past his prime at 37 years old in 1925, Thorpe still garnered attention and contributed to victories. He split the 1925 season between the Giants and the NFL's Rock Island Independents, and then played another three seasons of pro football.

All-New Britain invested in its football team, too. Owner Edward J. Dailey hired famous former Yale halfback Raymond "Ducky" Pond as head coach and employed notable local athletes Henry "Zip" Zehrer, captain of New Britain High School's 1924 state championship team, and Tracy "Shifty" Swem and Red O'Neil from Connecticut Agricultural College (former name of the University of Connecticut).

Pond's relationship with Milstead as former Yale teammates played a key role in the Giants traveling up to New Britain for the 2:30 p.m. game and ensured many Yale alumni and fans would be in attendance.

The week prior, the Giants played in New Jersey against the Newark Red Jackets, a team cobbled together at the last minute that disbanded after what amounted to a glorified scrimmage. NFL historians mark that game as an exhibition contest, as they do the game against All-New Britain because New Britain wasn't in the NFL.

But All-New Britain regularly played a full schedule during the 1920s and competed against NFL franchises in Frankford, Pennsylvania, and Providence while maintaining a fierce rivalry with the Hartford Blues, who became NFL members for one season in 1926. NFL Commissioner Joseph Carr blurred these league/non-league lines further when he named a player from a non-NFL team to the 1925 NFL All-Star Team.

All-New Britain was the first legitimate team the Giants played, making New Britain's Willow Brook Park the site of the Giants' first legitimate game.

The *New Britain Herald* announced the Giants' arrival: "New York's first league eleven will be a revelation to New Britain fans with its striking blue and red uniforms, hooded sweaters and huge numerals that can be seen for a block."

The Giants had been training at the Polo Grounds under floodlights at night after the players got off work from their day jobs. The team arrived in New Britain at 8 a.m. Sunday with 20 players, four club officials and one game official. They ate a pregame meal at the Hotel Burritt and dressed for the game at the Knights of Columbus on Franklin Square before heading to Willow Brook Park.

Game-day temperatures offered ideal autumn weather in New England, and the Giants came out playing sharp football.

Thorpe kicked off to start the game, and All-New Britain used several short passes to move near midfield. But the team attempted one too many. New York's Jack McBride intercepted a pass and ran it back for a touchdown and Dutch Hendrian kicked the extra point for a 7-0 lead. All-New Britain continued to push and consistently gained first downs against New York's defense, but fumbles stymied scoring opportunities.

In the second quarter, the teams traded punts — with Thorpe kicking for the Giants — and New York ended up with the ball deep in New Britain territory after a penalty against the hosts. With the ball five yards from the end zone, Thorpe got the call and blasted through for a touchdown from his halfback position.

When Hinkey Haines returned a punt 57 yards for another touchdown, the Giants took a 20-0 lead into halftime. Thorpe didn't play in the second half, and the last two quarters were quiet, save for Paul Jappe's 35-yard touchdown catch from New Britain native Tommy Myers to cap New York's scoring. (Myers, a halfback and quarterback at Fordham, played two NFL seasons, for the Giants in 1925 and the Brooklyn Lions in their only season in 1926.)

With a 26-0 win in hand, the Giants started making plans for the following week's game in Providence.

"NEW YORK GIANTS SWAMP LOCAL TEAM," the *Herald* declared before noting the admirable effort All-New Britain gave.

The New York Times wedged its

game report deep inside the sports section among stories of amateur tennis matches, horse racing in Paris and an international chess tournament. Pro football struggled for attention in New York City. When the Giants played their first home game later in October, Mara gave away 5,000 tickets to boost attendance and generate enthusiasm.

But that changed with Red Grange, the college phenom turned Chicago Bear who drew massive crowds and legitimized the NFL during his 1925 rookie season. His appearance at the Polo Grounds in December drew more than 70,000 fans, the largest crowd to see an NFL game at the time, and provided enough gate receipts to save the nearly bankrupt New York Giants, who finished 8-4 in their first NFL season.

Only two years later, in 1927, the Giants would win the first of their eight league championships.

How many people in Connecticut witnessed the Giants' historic first game? New Britain's newspaper reported about 3,000 — which today's Giants attract for training camp practices — while other news outlets, including *The New York Times*, claimed 10,000.

The New York Giants are now a proud NFL franchise with legions of fans who wait decades for the opportunity to become season-ticket holders in the sea of a sold-out crowd. But there was a time when they were grateful for crowds of any size, including the few thousand people who showed up at Willow Brook Park.

TRIVIA ANSWERS

The **Arizona Cardinals** were founded as the Morgan Athletic Club in 1898 in Chicago, and are the oldest continuously run pro football team in the U.S. The team joined the NFL in 1920 and came to be known as the Chicago Cardinals, before later moving to St. Louis and, finally, Arizona.

The **Chicago Bears** began play in 1919 in Decatur, Illinois, as the Decatur Staleys. Their first NFL season was in 1920 and they moved to Chicago in 1921. The Cardinals and Bears are the NFL's only surviving charter members.

The **Green Bay Packers** were founded as a semi-pro club in 1919, before joining the NFL in 1921 as the Acme Packers, so named for the packing company that funded the team and where founder Curly Lambeau worked. The Packers are the oldest team not to change locations.

THE HARTFORD BLUES Connecticut's NFL team



The Hartford schedule for the season follows:

SEPTEMBER.
26—New York Giants at Hartford.

OCTOBER.
2—Hartford at Frankford, Pa.
3—Yellow Jackets at Hartford.
9—Columbus, Ohio, at Hartford.
10—Hartford at Brooklyn.
17—Steam Rollers at Hartford.
24—Brooklyn at Hartford.
31—Kansas City at Hartford.

NOVEMBER.
7—Canton Bulldogs at Hartford.
14—Buffalo at Hartford.
21—Dayton Triangles at Hartford.
27—Duluth at Hartford.
28—Hartford at New York.

DECEMBER.
4—Pottsville at Hartford (pending).
5—Hartford at Providence.
12—Open.

TEAM PHOTO VIA WIKIMEDIA

The New York Giants appeared again in Connecticut in 1926, this time to play the Hartford Blues, a new NFL franchise. Owned by promoter extraordinaire George Mulligan, the Blues had played two years as a semi-pro outfit in Waterbury before Mulligan successfully petitioned the NFL to create a Hartford team. He had lured Notre Dame's famed Four Horsemen backfield and future Giants Hall of Fame lineman and head coach Steve Owen to play for the semi-pro Blues in 1925, but the NFL version of the team lacked star power.

The Blues played in East Hartford's Velodrome, where a football field was squeezed into the oval surrounded by the wooden track used for bicycle racing. Jack Keogh, a full-time dentist in Philadelphia, served as Hartford's head coach.

The Blues hosted their NFL debut at the Velodrome on Sept. 26 against the Giants, who won 21-0, in front of several thousand fans. Hartford finished 3-7 with wins over the Brooklyn Lions, Canton Bulldogs and Dayton Triangles. Unable to attract enough paying customers, the Blues dropped out of the NFL after 1926 and the franchise folded following a return to independent football in 1927.

Hartford Blues FOOTBALL Season Tickets

Season book, which admits one to all National League games played at the Velodrome during season 1926, are now on sale at the HARTFORD BLUES' HEADQUARTERS, 126 ALLYN ST. PHONE 2-1618. The scale of prices will be: General Admission $1.15; Reserved Grandstand $1.65; Chair Grandstand $2.30, all including taxes. Boys 50c.

SEASON TICKETS CAN BE PURCHASED AT FOSTER'S SMOKE SHOP AND GARDE SMOKE SHOP

SEASON BOOK
All $2.30 Chair Seats

Admission	$15.00
Federal Tax	1.50
State	.75
	$17.25

SAME SEAT GUARANTEED EVERY GAME

Top: The Hartford Blues 1926 squad; far left: The Blues' 1926 fall schedule, published in the *Hartford Courant*, July 13, 1926; left: advertisement for season tickets published Sept. 25, 1926.

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Connecticut home&garden

DEPORTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

FOLLOWING STINTS WITH KATE SPADE AND RALPH LAUREN, INTERIOR DESIGNER PATRICK MELE HAS SET UP SHOP IN HIS NATIVE GREENWICH. AND HE'S MAKING AN INTERNATIONAL STATEMENT.

BY ROBERT DIGIOIA

PHOTO: KYLE KNODELL



PHOTOS: ROBERT DIGIOIA





The aesthetic of Mele's shop is that of an eclectic salon, with curated pieces such as pottery by Nicolas Newcomb. **Previous page:** Mele and his mother, Patricia, who tends the shop.

A short distance from Greenwich's famous Avenue, perched on William Street, is a 500-square-foot jewel box of a retail studio. It's the brainchild of interior designer Patrick Mele.

Every inch glossy white, the shop is a 3D canvas of Mele's vision and finds from across the globe. Curated pieces and collections range from 20th-century kilim carpets to antique crystal Chinese theatrical headdresses to contemporary art by friends. On one wall, figurative drawings by Brooklyn-based artist Wayne Pate. Tables of pottery by Nicholas Newcomb. A display of Régime de Fleurs, a fragrance line for the body and home. Poetic wax from Creel and Gow candles. "For the most part, today's consumers thirst for something that offers a unique experience … somewhere and someone you can actually visit with, escape your everyday and perhaps learn a new thing or two," says Mele, whose design headquarters opened last December. "I think that's one thing the shop brings to the table."

A Greenwich native whose family has deep roots in the local business community, Mele felt his hometown was the ideal base of operations from which to serve his domestic and European clientele. "My dad, Richard Mele, owned several restaurants in Fairfield and Westchester counties … some may remember '64' on Greenwich Avenue," Mele says. "He's always had a great aesthetic sensibility, and runs his own design practice. My mother [Patricia] has exquisite taste as well, and she's had my back from day one, running the design business and now the shop. I couldn't do it without her!"

Creative influences came early for the now-34-year-old Mele. "I grew up in a family that was always building, creating, working on the house, going junking and antiquing, finding cool things. I began a window-dressing business when I was 14, and grew it to work with many retailers on Greenwich Avenue before I left for college."

Mele started college at Syracuse University studying environmental design his freshman and sophomore years, before transferring to NYU where he graduated with an art history degree. All the while he took electives in fashion and the decorative arts. Midway through his freshman year at Syracuse, he was asked to be the representative for the fashion school, responsible for entertaining visiting design luminaries such as Oscar de la Renta and Michael Kors, as well as Kate and Andy Spade. "I hit it off with the Spades right away, and they were generous enough to offer me a summer internship, which lasted four years." [See sidebar, "Remembering Kate."]

Immediately after graduating from NYU, Mele landed a full-time job with Ralph Lauren as a stylist and merchandiser in the home division for their flagship stores in the U.S. and Europe. "It was amazing," Mele says. "But even then I wanted to do my own thing." He launched his decorating and design business soon after.

Mele is content with his shop's location — close to but not on Greenwich Avenue, the home of high-end fashion and beautiful

PHOTO: KYLE KNODELL

baubles, and one of the most expensive streets for commercial real estate in the country. "I really like that we're a destination," Mele says. "I've always loved this corner, it's a well worn cut-through to the heart of downtown." He didn't want Greenwich Avenue. "It wasn't ever really an option; it's changed so much over the last 25 years. I'm praying for reasonable rents so more interesting people can move in and bring some much-needed vibrancy to town!"

Asked to divulge his influences and style, Mele says, "I've always gravitated to strong personalities and environments — something that leaves a lasting impression. The best rooms throughout history really made a personal statement about their inhabitants — where they've been, what made them tick and where they wanted to go. I think we used to be less afraid to make a statement through our surroundings … and have increasingly become timid and homogenized. I'm happy to work within a maximalist or minimalist framework depending on who and where I'm working … as long as we share a mutual passion for beauty."

And what motivates those who seek him out? "People come to a designer because they long to live in a way they presently are not," Mele says. "It's the designer's job to go in, distill the personality of the client, open their eyes to new possibilities, new ways of seeing, new approaches. More often than not, from my experience, people don't know exactly what they want, or they struggle to convey it aesthetically. It's my job to guide their initial intuitions to the next level, provide insight, knowledge; why that chair, why this fabric, what makes it worth investing in. I don't like to settle on the easy road, based on initial comfort levels. By the end of the project the client should feel they and their home have gone through a transformative process — that is when I feel we've achieved success."

Mele's staff is lean and agile. In addition to mom, he has a part-time draftsperson on staff, terrific interns who pull a great amount of weight, and an army of skilled artisans



Kate Spade, right, signs one of her products at Saks Fifth Avenue on Greenwich Avenue in 1998. PHOTO: MEL GREER

REMEMBERING KATE

Patrick Mele shares his memories of Kate Spade, the prodigious craftswoman, brand leader, and his mentor who he interned for from 2003-07. The global style icon took her own life in June at the age of 55.

GETTING STARTED

"My internship with the Spades began with reporting to Ruth Roberti. A quintessential New York artistic individual, she was Kate's showroom and visual director. Some of my responsibilities were to help her source artwork, furniture, rare books and vintage jewelry. She taught me a lot."

SET ON A PATH

"Spade was my first hands-on experience in New York City; the real start of my education in the world of fashion and design. Kate's innate ability to intermingle the two definitely impacted me. I'm indebted to her to this day. She put me on a career path. Because of her, I was able to get a job at Ralph Lauren. Without that serendipitous meeting at school, my life could have taken a different direction.

A GREAT WOMAN

"I'm blessed and honored to have known both Kate and Andy. I have nothing but heartwarming memories of her as a leader … generous, kind, witty, down-to-earth and super chic. A great woman who continually gave of her time, always willing to share some good advice."

A BYGONE ERA

"My time there was so special to me. It really was part of a bygone era in New York. Pre-social media. The internet wasn't ruling the conversation yet, the way it monopolizes it now. I met such quality people first-hand … authentic personalities, forged relationships that have lasted years. Harder to find that in 2018. Kate was old school, old world. She valued genteel environments and people. To have spent time with her was a gift."

PHOTO: KYLE KNODELL

and contractors with whom he has long-standing relationships.

Besides being a native, there are many circumstances that keep Mele in Greenwich. "It's a dynamic town with a big international audience," he says. "It's host to a sophisticated, well-traveled crowd with a thirst for the unique — it's my hometown and I'm happy to be here."

His advice for first-time Greenwich visitors: Explore backcountry Greenwich ("It's really beautiful"), Conyers Farm, the Audubon Society on Riversville Road ("Unbelievable"), Montgomery Pinetum park ("A fabulous horticultural institute, very cool"), Greenwich Point beaches ("Gorgeous"). He also recommends sampling the roast chicken at the French bistro Le Penguin.

Mele's current project highlights include a couple with residences in New York and London ("a beautiful Cheyne Walk Victorian"), two assignments in D.C., a large-scale, three-year Bedford, New York, renovation, and a pre-war duplex in Brooklyn Heights.

One of Mele's D.C. projects is in the Bloomingdale neighborhood, an area near Howard University that's seen a renaissance over the past several years. The project was a gut renovation of a 19th-century row house, modernizing and opening up the space. The residence has a wonderful garden and courtyard area in the rear that's being redone as well. The overall scheme, a mostly black-white-and-neutrals palette, incorporates streamlined and masculine-bent furnishings from Design Within Reach, Cassina and Gio Ponti.

The photo at right is a dining room from one of Mele's first residential projects in Pelham, New York, the client a long-time family friend. The room showcases Mele's discerning eye, primarily consisting of found antiques, anchored by a favorite table the client already owned. The two panels flanking the mirror in the back are framed antique wallpapers.

But things at home keep this industrious creative plenty busy. In May, Mele initiated a creator-in-residence program. His first subject was renowned artist and entrepreneur John Derian. "He was installed at my shop for a month; he's built an incredible following around his decoupage work … a whole aesthetic and environment that is specific to him, not easy to achieve."

Mele adds: "I may expand; a dream is to find the right second space in the city. There's more to do in Greenwich. Maybe develop different categories."

patrickmele.com



Above: The front of the shop is designed to have an inviting feel. **Below:** A Patrick Mele-designed dining room in a home in Pelham, New York. PHOTO: TIMOTHY KOLK

WE BELIEVE...

Artisanal is distinctly modern. Irreverent can be well-mannered.
Dress shirts can double as sport shirts.
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TOP SPAS: HARTFORD AND NEW HAVEN MAGAZINE

Best of Connecticut 2018



















Welcome to the third decade of the annual Best of Connecticut — our celebration of all the things we love about the state. This year, for the first time since 2008, we've incorporated the things *you* love, too. In each of our three main categories — Food & Drink, Fun & Leisure and Shopping — look for Readers' Choice picks, designated with a star. These are the winners of online votes in more than two dozen categories, from bars and tacos to movie theaters and hair salons.

Enjoy all the selections, and, as always, let us know what you think about the winners and any places that might have fallen through the cracks.

BY ERIK OFGANG, MIKE WOLLSCHLAGER, ALBIE YURAVICH AND GREG MOODY



BAKERY
Russo's Bakery
Enfield
Mouth-watering cookies, cakes and pastries abound — and the pizza's pretty good, too — but Russo's is home to some of the most unique and delicious cannoli you'll ever find. They have mastered dozens of styles (chocolate Oreo brownie and cookie dough are two of our favorites) with a minimum of 18 options always available.
860-741-7844, russosbakeryct.com

BAR
Celtic Cavern
RC
Middletown
860-894-2954, celticcavern.com

"Celtic Cavern has a great atmosphere and awesome people. The food is amazing and they have a wonderful beer selection!"
— Ashley Frost, Middletown

"When I retired they put my favorite beer on tap for me."
— Jerry, Rockfall

BARBECUE
Hoodoo Brown BBQ
Ridgefield
Hoodoo's slow-cooked brisket is in a class by itself. Other elite offerings include chicken, pork belly, pork ribs and the expensive-but-still-very-worth-it beef ribs. There's a reason why since opening in 2015 it's been a part of every conversation we've had about best barbecue in the state.
203-438-6033, hoodoobrownbbq.com

BEER (YOU CAN ACTUALLY FIND)
Two Juicy, Two Roads Brewing Co.
Stratford
In just its sixth year of operation, Two Roads is already one of the most successful breweries ever born in Connecticut. And the masterpiece of the first decade may prove to be Two Juicy, an unfiltered, cloudy New England-style double IPA. At 8.2 percent ABV it manages to pack a punch while still being surprisingly drinkable.
203-335-2010, tworoadsbrewing.com



Kent Falls Brewing Co.

BREAD
Wave Hill Breads
Norwalk
For this bakery, making bread is a passion that combines art and science. The breads here are made from unbleached wheat flour, organic spelt and organic rye berries that are milled for each batch. The bakery also offers a wild yeast sourdough, made from a "starter" that must be fed every day.
203-762-9595, wavehillbreads.com

BREAKFAST
O'Rourke's Diner
Middletown
Housed in a classic diner car at the edge of Middletown's downtown, O'Rourke's has been serving amazing breakfast and lunch items since 1941. The place is so beloved that after a fire decimated it in 2006, the community pitched in to help reopen it the following year.
860-346-6101, orourkesmiddletown.com

BREWERY
Kent Falls Brewing Co.
Kent
This farm brewery utilizes local ingredients to create elite beers in a wide range of styles, from approachable pilsners to tropical-tasting IPAs and barrel-aged farmhouse sours. Visitors can tour the brewery's hop yard and hang out inside or outside at the laid-back farmhouse taproom.
860-398-9645, kentfallsbrewing.com

BREWERY TO VISIT
Stony Creek Brewery
RC
Branford
203-433-4545, stonycreekbeer.com
Come for the house-brewed beer with a selection to match all tastes; stay for the atmosphere, with two huge decks overlooking the scenic Branford River.



MATT FURMAN @THEPOURTRAITS

BURGER

Swyft

Kent

Made from Randall cows, a heritage cattle breed raised at Rock Cobble Farm in South Kent, the "Swyft Burger" is worth every cent of its $18 price tag. Toppings of fontina cheese and basil aioli complete the dining experience.

860-592-0404, orehillandswyft.com

BURRITO

Broken Symmetry

Bethel

The San Diego-style burritos we long admired at the Green Grunion food truck are now offered alongside craft beers at this "gastro brewery" opened in the spring. Tightly wrapped with ingredients ranging from chicken to chorizo to french fries and a great veggie option, these burritos are addictive.

203-826-9907, brokensymmetrybrew.com

CAKE

JCakes

North Branford

Whether you're looking for an elegant wedding cake or a silly, over-the-top birthday cake (how about a minion or X-Man Wolverine's adamantium claws exploding through a cake top?), this shop can make your confection dreams come true. And with lovely French buttercream frosting, they taste just as good as they look.

203-488-2800, j-cakes.com

CANDY AND CHOCOLATE MAKER

Thorncrest Farm & Milk House Chocolates

Goshen

The best-tasting fruits and vegetables are those that are freshly harvested. Why would it be any different for chocolate? Using milk, cream and butter from the farm's carefully chosen milk cows, Kimberly Thorn and company make their small-batch chocolates by hand fresh daily. Stop by their cozy chocolate shop and try Thorncrest's artisanal chocolate creations for yourself.

860-309-2545, milkhousechocolates.net

CANDY & CHOCOLATE SHOP

RC

Apples Etc.

Branford

203-208-5220, facebook.com/applesetcllc

"Apples Etc. has such delicious selections. Always new flavors, great products, friendly and accommodating staff. Our favorite!"

— Sandy, North Haven

"Apples Etc. is the very best apples I have ever had, and I have tried a lot. Great gift ideas. Love love love them. Great people."

— Linda Bell-Roy, Southington

CLAM CHOWDER

Oyster Club

Mystic

This isn't your typical chowder. Rather than the thick, heavy goop you're used to, this chowder lets the core ingredients do the talking. And, oh, do they have a tale to tell … Fresh, local quahogs, slab bacon, potatoes, celery and fresh parsley combine into a warming, satisfying soup. If you still yearn for a certain level of creaminess, opt for the New England style, which comes with a hefty splash of heavy cream.

860-415-9266, oysterclubct.com

COFFEE

Story and Soil Coffee

Hartford

An array of coffee-connoisseur favorites are offered at this amazing little shop with a picturesque exterior. Enjoy pour over, aeropress, cold brew nitro and other specialty coffees from a rotating roster of craft coffee roasters. Owners Michael Acosta and husband-and-wife Michael and Sarah McCoy are incredibly passionate about their coffee shop and it shows.

860-540-3987, storyandsoilcoffee.com

CUPCAKES

Sugar Bakery

East Haven

The cupcakes at this East Haven bakery and its two food trucks provide the right mix of classic cupcake goodness and modern culinary innovation. At the store you can choose from 36 everyday flavors as well as daily specials and gluten-free options. Munch away.

203-469-0815, thesugarbakery.com

CRAFT COCKTAILS

116 Crown

New Haven

Some of the most knowledgeable mixologists around stand behind the onyx bar of 116 Crown as an expansive and creative cocktail menu covers all the angles. How expansive and creative? Sample the Breakfast in Vegas: Booker's bourbon, espresso shrub, strawberries, local honey, Veuve Clicquot champagne, St. George absinthe, and chewable coffee served straight up.

203-777-3116, 116crown.com



ALYSON BOWMAN



DELI

Vinny's Deli

RC

Wallingford

203-265-7288, vinnysdeli.com

Vinny's may (deservedly) call itself "The King of Roast Beef," but order anything here and you'll feel like you're getting the royal treatment. They also offer extensive catering options, and make it a point of pride to use only American ingredients whenever possible.

DINER

Sandy Hook Diner

RC

Sandy Hook

203-270-5509, on Facebook

"I love the Sandy Hook Diner! The staff is warm and friendly and the food is great. I always leave with a smile on my face."

— Wendy Leon-Gambetta, Newtown

DOUGHNUTS

Neil's Donuts

Wallingford

We nearly fell out of our chairs when we saw a notice on Neil's website announcing they'd be on vacation and closed for a week at the beginning of August. Where would we satisfy our doughnut fix? Luckily, Neil's is once again open for business and serving its dozens of varieties, including blueberry crumb, maple frosted and, um, nevermind, gotta go …

203-269-4255, neilsdonuts.com

FOOD TRUCK

Hapa Food Truck

Stamford

American street food mixes with Asian Pacific cuisine at this eclectic and unique food truck. Tacos and rice bowls share menu space with burgers, and all are made with a delicious fusion of flavors. Try the HAPA burger featuring grass-fed beef accentuated by pork belly and house aioli, on an ube bun, which is a purple, yam-flavored bread.

203-998-5918, hapafoodtruck.com

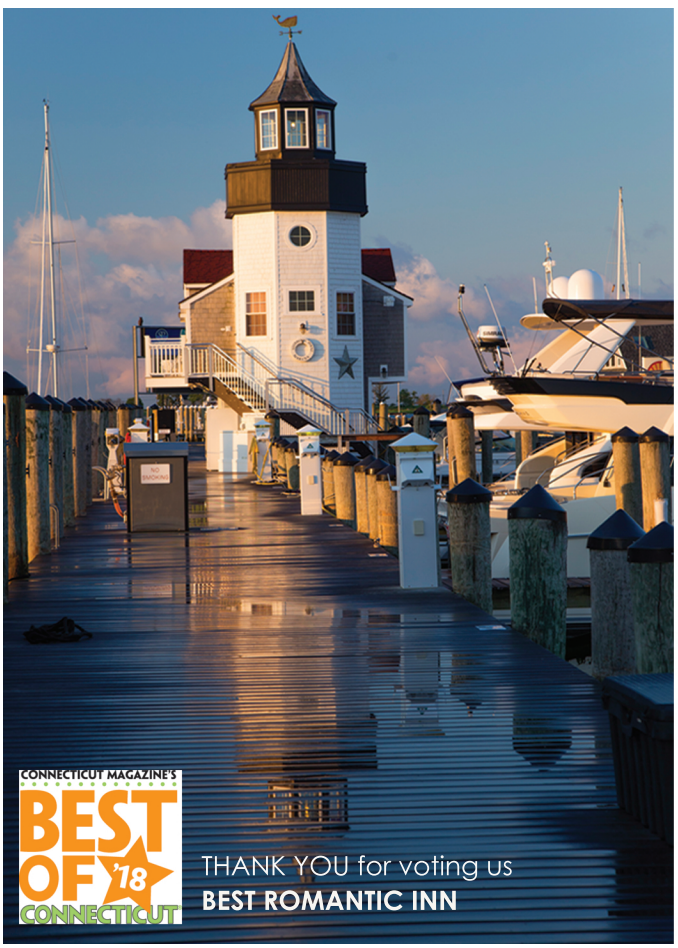
FRIES

Order of Fries

New Haven

For many eateries, the french fry is often an afterthought, an uninspired side dish. At this State Street spot, fries are the main attraction. Available with an array of toppings and flavors, the fries are perhaps strongest with a tenting of chili and cheese. The chili is beanless, but has hearty portions of beef and pork, as well as sweet notes of cinnamon and brown sugar. Complemented by sharp cheddar, it's a meal unto itself.

203-691-7654, facebook.com/orderoffries





SAYBROOK POINT
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Come for the sunset and stay for our sunrise!

2 Bridge Street, Old Saybrook, CT www.saybrook.com

GRINDER

Nardelli's

RC

Naugatuck, Waterbury, Southbury, Danbury, Middletown, Oxford, Cromwell, Southington, Meriden, Wallingford, East Hartford, Milford and Torrington

nardellis.com

The Nardelli family was the first to bring the classic grinder to Connecticut in the 1920s. Since then the family has grown a single grocery store into a local chain of 14 delis, with a Farmington location on the way. Whether it's due to the special "classic mix" marinade of veggies that's been a family secret for decades or the sheer variety of hot and cold sandwiches on your choice of bread, these delicious grinders are a perennial favorite.

HEALTH FOOD STORE

New Morning Market

Woodbury

Inspired by the back-to-the-earth movement of the 1970s, New Morning Market opened in 1971. More than 45 years later the store remains true to its local and sustainable roots with one of the state's largest selections of organic produce, local meats and dairy products from humanely raised animals. There's also a fresh-food counter and vitality center.

203-263-4868, newmorn.com

HOT DOGS

Cricket Car Hop

Stratford

Cricket first opened in 1949 and had a solid run all the way up until 2004. It finally reopened in a new location in the summer of 2017 and has been serving up delicious Hummel long dogs with Cricket's famous red relish on a toasted, New England-style bun like it never missed a day. The works at Cricket is red relish, mustard, hot sauce and sauerkraut, but we recommend many return visits until you find your perfect combination.

203-378-5191, cricketcarhop.com



MIKE WOLLSCHLAGER



ALISON BOWMAN

ICE CREAM (HOMEMADE)

Il Bacio Ice Cream

Danbury

The ice cream is silky and super creamy with a high butterfat content that is not so high that it obscures the flavors of the various ingredients owner and ice cream impresario Tony Nascimento uses. With hundreds of rotating flavors, and dozens available daily, you're always sure to find something you love.

203-794-1184

ICE CREAM SHOP

Mel's Downtown Creamery

RC

Pawcatuck

860-599-1363, melsdowntowncreamery.com

"Great atmosphere and staff ... delicious ice cream!!!"

— Vanessa Diaz, Norwich

"Wonderful service, great ice cream and sweet treats in a '50s-themed, family-friendly spot."

— Celena Lopriore, Charlestown, Rhode Island

"Absolutely THE best ice cream! In addition, Mel sponsors many fundraisers to benefit the community! Did I mention the great ice cream? ;)"

— Scott Cook, Pawcatuck



VIKTORIA SUNDQVIST

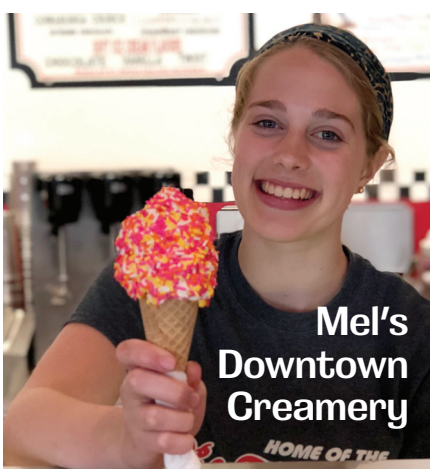
LOBSTER ROLL

Captain Scott's Lobster Dock

New London

It's hard to imagine a better lobster roll (or meal of any kind) than the hot lobster roll at this seasonal outdoor eatery. Hot lobster meat is slathered in butter and served on a toasted roll. For those not sold on the hot Connecticut-style roll, there are also cold lobster rolls.

860-439-1741, captscottsnl.com



NOODLE HOUSE

Mecha Noodle Bar

Fairfield, South Norwalk and New Haven

Mecha offers high-quality pho and ramen in a sleek setting. Each of the restaurant's three locations are places where you not only want to slurp up broth but want to hang out and sip sake and specialty cocktails afterward.

Fairfield: 203-292-8222
South Norwalk: 203-295-8718
New Haven: 203-691-9671
mechanoodlebar.com

OUTDOOR BAR

The Hops Co.

Derby

Tucked inconspicuously back from the busy thoroughfare of Route 34, The Hops Co. is an oasis for beer lovers and those just looking to get together with friends and have a good time. A spacious rear beer garden has firepits, cornhole and plenty of picnic tables. Tall trees line the 4½-acre space, providing nice spots of shade when the sun is blazing. A great beer selection and Zuppardi's pizza will keep you full and happy.

203-734-1616, thehopscompany.com

PIE

Oronoque Farms

Shelton

The lineage of this bakery began with a roadside stand in front of a farmhouse at Oronoque Orchards in Stratford back in 1949. Now in Shelton, Oronoque Farms is baking up scrumptious pies of many varieties including apple, blueberry, cherry (in addition to the crumb version of all three) and an assortment of cream pies, chiffons and custards. The fall season will bring pumpkin, pecan and chocolate pecan.

203-925-4237, oronoquefarms.com

PIZZA

Modern Apizza

New Haven

Along with Sally's and Pepe's, Modern forms the holy trinity of New Haven pizza, but it is sometimes third in the ranking behind the two Wooster Street giants. However, with Pepe's diluting its brand with expansion and Sally's eyeing multiple locations under new ownership, Modern is rising in the depth charts and may carry the wood-fired torch of New Haven pizza into the next generation. And, yeah, the pizza here remains as awesome as ever.

203-776-5306, modernapizza.com

SANDWICH

Johnny Salami's

New Haven

Tucked away in Food Terminal Plaza at Long Wharf, Johnny Salami's has been slapping together consistently craveable sandwiches year after year. Everything from paninis and parmesans to Reubens and wraps is complemented by daily specials and a general menu approach of "If you don't see it ask for it!" If you're lucky you'll pay a visit on Cuban egg roll day — it's Johnny's take on a Cuban sandwich, deep fried and served with chipotle mayo.

203-777-7906, johnnysalamis.com

SEAFOOD

The Whelk

Westport

This upscale spot overlooking the Saugatuck River prides itself on serving the finest local and sustainable seafood. The raw bar is stacked with littlenecks and oysters from Connecticut to Maine. Deviled eggs topped with fried oysters are fiendishly good. Seafood stew is smoking with Calabrian chilies. Mackerel, shrimp, octopus, lobster, the list goes on and on …

203-557-0902, thewhelkwestport.com



Nouveau Monde Wine Bar & Bistro
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Special Event Concierge: 203.408.6229
www.NouveauMondeWineBar.com |
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CONNECTICUT MAGAZINE'S BEST OF CONNECTICUT 18
Wine Spectator AWARD OF EXCELLENCE 2018



The Soup Girl

ALYSON BOWMAN

SOUP

The Soup Girl

Hamden

This humble Hamden storefront is a cathedral of soup love. There are several soups offered daily and there are even soup deliveries available in Hamden and surrounding towns. Some recent specials include zuppa de Bolognese, chicken escarole bean and a vegetarian and gluten-free corn chowder.

203-248-7687, thesoupgirl.com

SPIRIT

Bourbon line, Litchfield Distillery

Litchfield

Connecticut is not known for its bourbon, but the Litchfield Distillery is trying to change that. From a double-barreled, 10-year bourbon whiskey to a flavored line that includes maple, coffee and vanilla bourbons, Litchfield Distillery is a great introduction to the bourbon world and a fun place to visit.

860-361-6503, litchfielddistillery.com



5 DIAMOND PHOTOGRAPHY

Litchfield Distillery

TACOS

El Camion

RC

Woodbury

203-405-3008, el-camion.com

"Best fresh, gourmet-quality tacos I have ever had!"

— Melanie, Colchester

"El Camion hands down has the most refreshing, flavor-packed tacos and burritos in New England."

— Ryan Connelly, Woodbury

TACOS (TRADITIONAL)

Los Garcia Mexican Fusion

Waterbury

The tacos at this hidden-gem Mexican establishment feature made-to-order corn tortillas served warm and stuffed with your choice of chicken, chorizo or Los Garcia's signature al pastor, then slathered with one of 12 different salsas. We eat a lot of tacos, none better than the ones served here.

203-910-9432, facebook.com/losgarciamexicanfusion

VEGETARIAN & VEGAN FOOD

G-Zen

Branford

You'll be forgiven for going straight to the desserts at this haven for the health conscious. Replacing processed sugar, milk and eggs with ingredients such as organic, whole-grain pastry flour and nut milks, G-Zen's desserts — highlights are the raw chocolate almond butter crunch torte and spiced carrot cake — will leave you satisfied, but without the guilt. Besides the sweet stuff, there are countless "powered by plants" menu choices, including hand-cut sweet potato G-Fries and raw tacos packed with walnut "taco meat" and fresh guacamole.

203-208-0443, g-zen.com

WINE BAR

Nouveau Monde Wine Bar + Bistro

Sandy Hook

With more than 40 wines by the glass and 130 wines by the bottle, the Wine Spectator award-winning wine list here is impressive, but what makes this place truly special is the way the staff helps customers navigate the list. From affordable gems to high-end offerings, there is something for every wine drinker and the staff helps you find it.

203-491-2723, nouveaumondewinebar.com

WINERY TO VISIT

Chamard Vineyards

RC

Clinton

860-664-0299, chamard.com

"Best wine in the state and awesome food. Beautiful grounds, top-notch service, staff, all around the best."

— Debbie Lupo, Monroe

WINE SHOP

Total Wine & More

RC

Milford, West Hartford, Norwalk and Manchester

totalwine.com

This popular chain emphasizes both variety and quality, stocking more than 8,000 wines (as well as thousands of beers and other beverages) from around the world, and prides itself on its employees' expert knowledge. If you want to become an expert yourself, they offer regular classes on the finer points of wines and other spirits.

WINGS

J. Timothy's

Plainville

Many claim to be the best, and many are indeed very good. But this is J. Timothy's category, now and maybe forever. Both the drumsticks and flats are meaty and tender and their signature "dirt" style is the only way to go — sauced, fried, sauced again, fried again. J. Tim's sends out more than 300 tons of wings per year in four perfected flavors: original buffalo, honey gold BBQ, teriyaki and sweet red chili.

860-747-6813, jtimothys.com

Activities

ADVENTURE PARK
Adventure Park at Storrs
Storrs

The Adventure Park at Storrs is five acres of forest fun. Multiple levels of difficulty ensure everyone from daytrippers to daredevils has a course they can conquer. Home to eight trails, 21 zip lines and more than 100 challenge bridges, the park also provides trained staff to monitor and assist if needed. Nighttime Glow in the Park events are scheduled for Sept. 7 and 21.

860-946-0606, storrsadventurepark.com

BEACH
Hammonasset Beach State Park
RC

Madison

ct.gov/deep/hammonasset

Connecticut's largest shoreline park draws more than 1 million visitors a year to its spacious, 2-mile beach, hundreds of campsites and the Meigs Point Nature Center, a year-round hub of all-ages programs and activities.

COASTAL CRUISE
Mystic Whaler Cruises
New London

The bliss you feel as you sail aboard the 110-foot Mystic Whaler schooner — the sun in your face, the wind in your hair — is hard to beat. You have a variety of options to choose from including a sunset lobster dinner cruise, lunch, brunch or multi-day overnight cruises. The six bathrooms with hot showers below deck come in handy for the sleep-aboard adventures. Each cruise starts with a loving look at the waterfront of the Thames River, featuring historic forts and lighthouses.

800-697-8420, mysticwhalercruises.com

COUNTRY FAIR
Durham Fair
RC

Durham

860-349-9495, durhamfair.com

Connecticut's largest agricultural fair is a four-day, volunteer-run festival that attracts 200,000 people annually. This year's fair (Sept. 27-30) will, as always, have a bounty of prizes, exhibits, contests, amusement rides and fair food, and Melissa Etheridge and Scotty McCreery are this year's entertainment headliners.

FARMERS MARKET
Coventry Farmers Market
RC

Coventry

coventryfarmersmarket.org

On Sundays from June through October this market is held at the Nathan Hale Homestead, where you can find an unparalleled selection of fresh fruits and vegetables, rustic breads, cheeses and much more. You'll also find artisan crafts, activities for the kids and live entertainment.



GOLF COURSE (MINI)
Matterhorn Mini Golf
Canton

"Matterhorn is a labor of love for me," owner Autumn Sutherland says. "I designed, built it and actively manage it all day, every day." Decked out in a colorful embroidered Swiss dress, Sutherland is hard to miss at this 18-hole course devoted to all things Switzerland. Perhaps harder to spot, but no less endearing, is Sutherland's dog Mulligan, a tiny Coton de Tuléar and course mascot. As for the golfing, it's a challenging course featuring Swiss icons such as Heidi, a bobsled track and ski moguls. The soundtrack? Yodeling, of course.

860-795-0234, matterhornminigolf.com



GOLF COURSE (PUBLIC)
Lake of Isles Golf Club and Resort
North Stonington

Legendary golf course architect Rees Jones designed this 36-hole treasure (one public course, one private course) surrounding the 90-acre Lake of Isles. Island greens and tees provide a setting not commonly found outside of private country clubs, and the scenery gets even more stunning as the leaves begin to turn in the fall. *Golfweek* magazine consistently lists Lake of Isles as the best place to play in Connecticut.

888-475-3746, lakeofisles.com

PLACE TO SEE A GAME
Dunkin' Donuts Park
RC

Hartford

860-240-5591, yardgoatsbaseball.com

This stadium in downtown Hartford may have opened a year late, but it was worth the wait. With 6,121 seats close to the action, fantastic food and beverage options, and some of the best baseball prospects in the world taking the field, a Yard Goats game has become a top summer option. Dunkin' Donuts Park also has free movie nights on the big screen — *Black Panther* is playing Sept. 18 — and the second annual G.O.A.T. Brew Fest is Oct. 20.



PICK-YOUR-OWN FARM
Jones Family Farms
Shelton

From early summer to late fall, there is plenty to harvest at this 400-acre working farm. In early summer, it's plump strawberries. Blueberries follow later in the season. Come fall, it's time to pick your pumpkin for that perfect jack-o'-lantern, as well as other gourds and squash. And before Christmas arrives, scour the farm's 200 acres of Christmas trees. Pro tip: To beat the post-Thanksgiving rush, head to the farm earlier in November for your tree.

203-929-8425, jonesfamilyfarms.com

SKIING
Ski Sundown
New Hartford

While not the state's biggest ski resort, Ski Sundown boasts impressive pitch and a nice selection of trails to satisfy a variety of skills levels. Of its 16 trails, 15 are lighted for nighttime slope action, and there's a host of freestyle terrain. For those inclined for a long, leisurely run, Tom's Treat meanders down the mountain for a mile. For the experienced, there are three black diamonds and a double black diamond, the blood-pumping Satan's Stairway.

860-379-7669, skisundown.com

SKIING (WITHOUT SNOW)
Powder Ridge Mountain Park & Resort
Middlefield

Can't ski without snow, right? Wrong, at least at Powder Ridge, which has synthetic slopes for skiing, snowboarding and tubing. Now in its second season of synthetic snow sports, Powder Ridge was the first to offer the activity in the Northeast. For those used to the real white stuff, it won't take long to get used to this hard-packed faux snow. It's just one part of a strategy to make the resort a year-round destination, as the park also has a new 1,400-foot-long zip line, an impressive mountain-biking experience, and disc golf.

866-860-0208, powderridgepark.com

SPORTS COMPLEX
Chelsea Piers Connecticut
Stamford

The first time you step into this monstrous, 465,000-square-foot complex, you'll be amazed at what can fit under one roof. Seven tennis courts, three swimming pools (one Olympic size), two hockey rinks, basketball and volleyball courts, turf fields, tracks, batting cages, a gymnastics training center and, somehow, even more. There's also a juice bar, cafe, and bar and grill, because it's pretty hard not to work up an appetite while you're here.

203-989-1000, chelseapiersct.com

Overnights

CITY STAY
The Goodwin
Hartford

The Goodwin reopened last year with a remodeling that somehow manages to honor the grand and classic legacy of the 1881 building while simultaneously being new and hip. Porrón & Piña, the recently opened restaurant and bar within the hotel from chef Tyler Anderson, completes the winning equation.

860-246-1881, goodwinhartford.com



COUNTRY B&B
Connecticut River Valley Inn
Glastonbury

Built in the 1740s, it has the quaint charm of a mid-18th century property with all the modern amenities one could ask for at a bed and breakfast. There are rooms for all seasons — Winter Solstice, Autumn Glow, Summer Wind and Spring Rain — and the River of Dreams room, a nod to the nearby Connecticut River whose banks are just a short walk away.

860-633-7374, crvinn.com



ROMANTIC OVERNIGHT

Saybrook Point Inn

Old Saybrook

860-395-2000, saybrook.com

RC

Seeking a romantic seaside getaway on Long Island Sound? The luxury suites at the Saybrook Point Inn will do just fine. Dine in your room or at the inn's award-winning, upscale restaurant, Fresh Salt. If you want to bring your getaway up yet another notch, the inn's one-of-a-kind Lighthouse Suite gives you a private kitchenette and living area and unobstructed water views from every angle.

INN FOR FOODIES

Copper Beech Inn

Ivoryton

Even if you don't stay at this historic estate — with its 22 unique rooms spread across three houses — you'll want to visit its award-winning restaurant, The Oak Room. Helmed by chef Carlos Cassar, the eatery has a sophisticated menu replete with local ingredients. Dine indoors or out, in the formal main dining room or more casual bar, which also features a soul-warming fireplace. And with a 2,500-bottle wine cellar, you're sure to have a nice night.

860-767-0330, copperbeechinn.com

ON THE WATER

Madison Beach Hotel

Madison

When a hotel is best known for its weddings, it's a safe bet the accommodations are going to be top-notch. Combine that with its close proximity to the ocean — a furnished porch overlooks Long Island Sound — and you have the jewel of the Connecticut shoreline. Throw in an award-winning restaurant and it's hard to argue this isn't the perfect spot for a romantic getaway or weekend escape.

203-245-1404, madisonbeachhotel.com

UNIQUE RESORT

Winvian Farm

Morris

Occupying 113 rustic acres in the Litchfield Hills, Winvian Farm is a wondrous lodging destination that owners call an "oasis of peace." You're sure to find plenty of rest and relaxation in one of the resort's 18 architect-designed cottages, including a treehouse, an arts-and-crafts bungalow or a fully restored Coast Guard helicopter (it's more spacious than you'd think!). Complete your inner peace with countless activities, such as fitness classes and a 5,000-square-foot luxury spa.

860-567-9600, winvian.com

Leonardo

Discoveries from Verrocchio's Studio

June 29–October 7, 2018

A landmark exhibition investigating Leonardo da Vinci's early years as an artist, featuring paintings newly attributed to the Renaissance master

Catalogue available

Free and open to the public | artgallery.yale.edu

@yaleartgallery #leonardodiscoveries

Image: Leonardo da Vinci, *The Annunciation* (detail), ca. 1475–79. Oil on panel. Musée du Louvre, Paris, M.I. 598. Photo: Centre de Recherche et de Restauration des Musées de France (C2RMF), Jean-Louis Bellec

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Arts & Entertainment



ART GALLERY
Hygienic Art
New London

Hygienic Art is difficult to define, but that's one of the things that makes it so quirky and interesting. Set amid Bank Street's vibrant cultural scene, it's a community group that supports a variety of arts-themed happenings in the area. It's also home to an edgy, anything-goes art gallery featuring local artists. The highlight of a recent visit was an overwhelming, wall-to-wall sticker art display. But their big project is the construction of an amphitheater next door, a first for the city. Look for even more off-the-wall performance art.

860-443-8001, hygienic.org

CULTURAL ATTRACTION (ART)
Yale University Art Gallery
New Haven

Current exhibitions include artwork from a virtually unknown period in the career of a young Leonardo da Vinci and the largest collection of Sol LeWitt wall drawings in the world. September brings the opening of *Seriously Funny: Caricature Through the Centuries*, a recent acquisition of 19th-century French satirical lithographs. YUAG's permanent collection spans 1½ city blocks and features more than 4,000 works plus a rooftop terrace and sculpture garden.

203-432-0601, artgallery.yale.edu



CULTURAL ATTRACTION (HISTORY)
Thames River Heritage Park
Groton and New London

This "park" unites more than a dozen national and historic sites dotting the Thames River via a water taxi. The historic attractions include the Fort Trumbull State Park, Fort Griswold Battlefield State Park, the Submarine Force Museum (home of the *USS Nautilus*), and will ultimately include the National Coast Guard Museum planned for New London's waterfront.

thamesriverheritagepark.org

CULTURAL ATTRACTION (WITH KIDS)
Mystic Seaport Museum
Mystic

We can't speak for everyone, but hands-on learning may be the best way to learn, especially for children. At Mystic Seaport, kids can hang in the Home Port activity center, learn about the marine environment on Australia Beach, visit the children's museum and find out how ships work in the Discovery Barn. Need a souvenir? Make your own and build a toy boat.

860-572-0711, mysticseaport.org

MOVIE THEATER
Cinemark
RC

North Haven

203-234-8100, cinemark.com

When the Cinemark chain opened a 57,000-square-foot, 14-screen multiplex in North Haven in 2015, it raised the bar for the fully immersive cinematic experience in Connecticut. Pick your snacks from the cafeteria-like concession area, grab a drink from the bar, and settle into your reserved luxury recliner to enjoy the latest blockbuster in digital surround sound and projected on a screen measuring up to 68 feet by 32 feet.

MUSEUM
Wadsworth Atheneum
RC

Hartford

860-278-2670, thewadsworth.org

The nation's oldest continuously operating public art museum rivals any in the country, with more than 50,000 pieces of art from around the world in its permanent collection, and blockbuster traveling exhibits — such as *Monsters & Myths: Surrealism* and *War in the 1930s and 1940s* (Oct. 20-Jan. 13), which will showcase works from Salvador Dalí, Joan Miró, Max Ernst and more.

INDIE CINEMA
The Avon Theatre Film Center
Stamford

This is the type of theater every film buff wants in their city. In addition to new films, The Avon has several recurring film series including French cinema and cult classics that includes annual screenings of *The Big Lebowski*. We love this theater but, well, that's just, like, our opinion, man.

203-967-3660, avontheatre.org

MUSIC CLUB
Infinity Music Hall & Bistro
Hartford

A cozy space with superior acoustics and wonderful bistro selections combine for a satisfying dinner-and-music experience. The talent that comes through this place is also impressive. West Coast gangsta rap legend Warren G brought his *I Need a Light* tour to Infinity in August. For country pop, check out LeAnn Rimes on Sept. 23 and Tegan Maria on Sept. 27. On Nov. 2, multi-genre group Parsonsfield (hailing from Mansfield) team up with Connecticut native and NBC's *The Voice* winner Sawyer Fredericks.

866-666-6306, infinityhall.com

PLACE TO SEE LOCAL BANDS
Toad's Place
RC

New Haven

203-624-8623, toadsplace.com

You never know who you might see at Toad's — a given night could bring a band playing anything from rock to rap to reggae, from upcoming acts to musical legends, on the same stage where Bob Dylan, the Rolling Stones and U2 have made appearances. Upcoming shows include rapper Lil Baby (Sep. 2) and punk legends the Descendants (Oct. 28).


PHOTOS: ALLEN PHILLIPS / WADSWORTH ATHENEUM

PERFORMING ARTS VENUE (LARGE)

College Street Music Hall

New Haven

The hits just keep on coming at College Street. With enough space for about 2,000 guests, the new kid on the New Haven arts-and-entertainment scene has become a magnet for some of music's top acts, as well as some quirky performances (the Mystery Science Theater 3000 Live! show arrives Oct. 13). Other highlights are Ziggy Marley (Sept. 15), Ray LaMontagne (Oct. 8) and Arlo Guthrie (Oct. 20).

203-867-2000, collegestreetmusichall.com

PERFORMING ARTS VENUE (SMALL)

FTC StageOne

Fairfield

This intimate, 225-seat theater is the flagship of the Fairfield Theater Company. It has hosted hundreds of great shows, from a wide range of musical acts to comedians. Along with the 640-person capacity Warehouse at FTC, The Fairfield Theater Company hosts several high-quality shows a week.

203-259-1036, fairfieldtheatre.org

THEATER

Shubert Theatre

RC

New Haven

203-562-5666, shubert.com

"The Shubert Theatre is a great local venue to see shows that have the same great quality they have on Broadway but in a smaller and more intimate place. I've grown up seeing shows at the Shubert and it is where my love of theater began."

— Jacqueline Nathman, Branford

THEATER FOR ORIGINAL SHOWS

Yale Repertory Theatre

New Haven

Year after year, Yale Rep turns out original works that reflect our times and challenge our thinking. From *El Huracán* (Sept. 28-Oct. 20), a Miami-set story of family and forgiveness, to *Good Faith: Four Chats About Race and the New Haven Fire Department* (Feb. 1-23), a new play about the landmark 2009 civil rights case involving the city and a group of its firefighters, the Rep delivers world-class drama.

203-787-4282, longwharf.org

THEATER FOR TOURING SHOWS

The Bushnell

Hartford

One word: *Hamilton*. The touring show of Lin-Manuel Miranda's uber-hit visits The Bushnell from Dec. 11-30. Start working now on getting those tickets, if you haven't done so already. Sheer quality and the kaleidoscope of performances define the venue. The hilarious Broadway hit *The Play That Goes Wrong* features Sept. 25-30, Lily Tomlin brings the laughs Oct. 19, the puppet-filled *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* stops by Nov. 10, and astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson shoots for the stars Dec. 3.

860-987-5900, bushnell.org

III Casinos III

CASUAL DINING

Bobby's Burger Palace

Mohegan Sun

The brainchild of celebrity chef Bobby Flay, this restaurant specializes in burgers with toppings inspired by the culinary traditions found in different parts of the U.S. Regardless of which burger you get, all are winners. The milkshakes are equally excellent.

860-862-2277, bobbysburgerpalace.com



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Vue 24

Foxwoods

One thing that's not a gamble at Foxwoods is whether you're going to have a great meal at Vue 24. The menu is rich with delicacies such as foie gras, escargot and osetra caviar, and options not available even in fine establishments such as the Grand Pequot Seafood Tower (Stonington lobster, king crab, giant shrimp, oysters and clams) and châteaubriand steak prepared tableside.

800-369-9663, foxwoods.com/vue-24

ENTERTAINMENT VENUE (LARGE)

Foxwoods Grand Theater

Foxwoods

The biggest concert and performance venue at Foxwoods brings in some of the biggest stars of music, comedy and more. Comedian Gabriel Iglesias, bluegrass superstar Alison Krauss, and R&B legends Bell Biv Devoe and Bobby Brown will fill the 4,000-seat theater in September. Tim Allen and Hall & Oates are slated for November shows.

800-200-2882, foxwoods.com

ENTERTAINMENT VENUE (SMALL) RC

Wolf Den

Mohegan Sun

888-226-7711, mohegansun.com

You can't beat a free concert. Located in the middle of the Mohegan Sun casino, the Wolf Den is an intimate venue that's hosted acts including MC Hammer, the Gin Blossoms and John Cafferty.

NIGHTCLUB

Avalon

Mohegan Sun

Avalon is another repeat winner that will be hard-pressed to be knocked from its pedestal. Big-name DJs spin records through a state-of-the-art sound system that reverberates throughout the 10,000-square-foot party place. Dress to impress is the code, so you know the crowd inside is grown and sexy. Planning a bachelor(ette) or birthday party? It's on at Avalon.

860-862-7042, avalonmohegansun.com





III Health & Beauty III

DAY SPA

Grace Mayflower Inn & Spa

Washington

For the ultimate "treat yourself" experience, retreat to this 58-acre country manor paradise. At 17 pages, the Grace Mayflower's spa-offerings menu is longer than most restaurants'. With a smorgasbord of massages, facial treatments galore, sound therapy, "soul-reviving rituals" and more, this spa resort takes the wellness of your mind, body and spirit quite seriously.

860-868-9466, gracehotels.com/mayflower

PLACE TO SPEND YOUR WINNINGS

Lux Bond & Green

Mohegan Sun

Naugatuck Valley merchant Morris A. Green started this company 120 years ago with a horse and cart on the streets of Waterbury. Fast-forward a century and a score and now Lux Bond & Green is one of the longest continuously operating, singularly owned jewelers in the country. No more horse and cart, either. Now customers show up with wads of cash fresh off hitting a jackpot or calling an all-in bluff in the poker room.

860-862-9900, lbgreen.com

SHOPPING

Tanger Outlets

Foxwoods

Tanger is a respected name in high-quality shopping. And at Foxwoods, Tanger's shopping destination does not disappoint. With about 100 stores — including Ann Taylor, Coach, Kate Spade, Steve Madden, Connecticut's own Vineyard Vines and many more — you should probably set aside a weekend to browse the full selection.

860-383-4340, tangeroutlet.com/foxwoods/stores

SPA

G Spa & Salon

Foxwoods

Founded by renowned salon and fashion designer Gretta Monahan, this spa features 21,000 square feet of pampering space. From massages, facials, hair services, manicures and pedicures to a sauna, waterfall, pool and eucalyptus steam room, G Spa has all the ingredients for supreme relaxation.

860-312-4772, foxwoods.com/g-spa

III Health & Beauty III

FITNESS CLUB/GYM RC

Empowered Indoor Cycling Studio

Glastonbury

860-430-2170, empoweredstudio.com

"Empowered Indoor Cycling Studio because it's state-of-the-art. It has awesome instructors, amazing bikes, fun classes!"

— Jocelyn DeMaio, Manchester

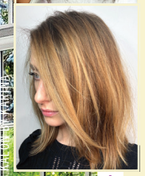
HAIR SALON RC

Kalon by Karina

Trumbull

475-239-6666, kalonbykarina.com





"Kalon by Karina is just fantastic. She gives the best haircut I have ever had and she actually spends the time to teach you how to style it. Warm and inviting space!"

— Keira Robilotto, Trumbull

"Karina is an expert, she is friendly, reliable, and professional and makes everyone that comes in feel like family without being overbearing. She listens to your needs and always delivers the best haircuts and styles."

— Nicole, Stamford

MED SPA

Versailles Medical Spa

Darien

Versailles specializes in the latest and most advanced types of non-surgical cosmetic enhancement, including skin rejuvenation, wrinkle reduction, fat reduction, laser hair removal, body treatments, cosmetic tattooing, permanent makeup and more. Approaching a decade serving Fairfield County and beyond, Versailles provides an elegant and discreet environment for these most personal of procedures.

203-424-2588, versaillesmedicalspa.com

RELAXATION TREATMENT

PuREST Float

Trumbull and New Haven

The sensory-deprivation salt baths at PuREST Float offer intense relaxation. The high salt content allows you to float without effort and the chambers cut out all sight and sounds, creating a trippy and truly soothing experience. There's now even a couple's float option in the New Haven location.

Trumbull: 203-445-6918

New Haven: 203-404-7755, purestfloat.com

YOGA STUDIO

Bloom Yoga Fitness Studios

Southington

How can you tell they know their stuff at Bloom Yoga? Because their alums have gone on to launch other yoga destinations in the state. In addition to their yogi-training program, Bloom Yoga has a variety of classes to suit the yoga enthusiast, or someone just getting started. Offerings range from yoga with children (and goats!) to meditation workshops, while a wellness studio features spa-like amenities such as massage and acupuncture.

860-620-4530, bloomyogafitness.com

SHOPPING CENTER/DESTINATION

The Promenade Shops at Evergreen Walk

South Windsor

This collection of shops and dining options covers more than 350,000 square feet and is made up of retailers such as Anthropologie, Banana Republic, Eddie Bauer and L.L. Bean and restaurants such as Panera, Red Heat Tavern and Ted's Montana Grill. Designed to be pedestrian friendly, there's a traditional New England village vibe augmented by a fountain and fire pits.

860-432-3398, thepromenadeshopsatevergreenwalk.com



The Promenade Shops at Evergreen Walk

GREG MOODY

III Home & Garden III



Cindy's Unique Shop

MIKE WOLLSCHLAGER

ANTIQUES

Cindy's Unique Shop

RC

Wallingford

203-269-9341, on Facebook

Since Cynthia Ruszczyk opened this consignment shop in 2010, customers have consistently found two things: a warm and friendly owner and staff, and an ever-changing selection of beautiful but affordable treasures. Cindy even offers layaways.

ANTIQUES (MULTI-DEALER)

Stratford Antique Center

Stratford

This is where dealers and thrifters head for great finds that won't bust the budget. And let's face it, when looking for interesting pieces for the home, why would you settle for some mass-produced item from a big-box store that millions of other people have, too? Speaking of big boxes, Stratford has 16,500 square feet jam-packed with all manner of antiques and collectibles from more than 200 dealers.

203-378-7754, stratfordantiquecenter.com/sac

FLEA MARKET

Elephant's Trunk

New Milford

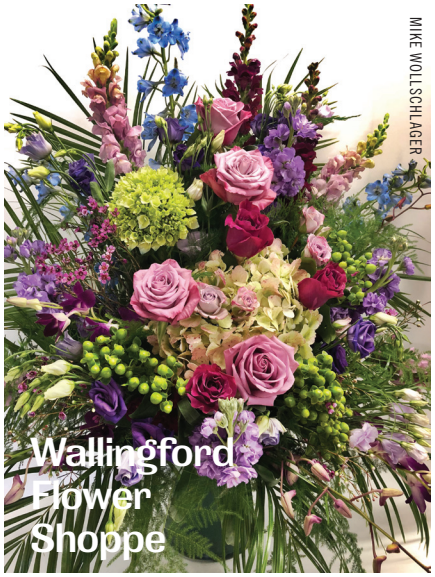
This New England treasure-hunting institution has been going strong for more than 40 years. Open every Sunday (even holiday weekends) from late March through mid-December, the Trunk is typically filled with some 500 vendors with everything from bargain finds to high-end goods. There's no telling what you might unearth on any given Sunday.

860-355-1448, etflea.com



Stratford Antique Center

MIKE WOLLSCHLAGER



MIKE WOLLSCHLAGER

FLORIST

Wallingford Flower Shoppe

Wallingford

Centrally located (on Center Street, naturally) between Route 5 and Main Street in downtown Wallingford, this purveyor of plants and fragrant flowers is a repeat winner, and with good reason. Approaching seven decades of designing decorative arrangements, this family-owned shop offers same-day delivery and awesome options for all occasions.

203-265-1514, wallingfordflower.com

GARDEN CENTER

Van Wilgen's Garden Center

RC

North Branford

203-488-2110, vanwilgens.com

Since the roots of the business began to grow nearly a century ago, Van Wilgen's has grown into the destination for the green-thumb crowd. Most of the plants are either locally sourced or grown on Van Wilgen's own 56-acre nursery, and can be bought at the original North Branford location and at Garden Mart outlets in Guilford, Old Saybrook and Milford.

HOME DECOR

Plain Goods

New Preston

Plain Goods offers stylish antique and vintage furniture, lighting, mirrors, art, textiles and rugs, and more. They also offer home design services aimed at creating "environments that are personal and refined, with a quiet beauty that is integrated into everyday life."

860-868-0280, plain-goods.com





III Boutiques III

CONSIGNMENT
Pennywise Consignment Shop
Mystic

The rule of thumb with clothing is, if you haven't worn something in more than a year, it's time to get rid of it. But don't throw it out! Besides donating it, another good option is consigning. Pennywise is an ideal location to consign your men's and women's designer and name-brand clothing and jewelry. Of course, if you need to spruce up your wardrobe, Pennywise is also a top spot, boasting items with labels such as DKNY, Banana Republic, Tory Burch and Lilly Pulitzer.

860-572-9232, pennywisemystic.com

MEN'S WEAR
Daswani Clothiers
West Hartford

Jack Daswani has been in business for more than 30 years and clearly knows what he's doing. His clothing store works with designers from around the world and offers customers access to top brands as well as custom-designed clothing.

860-233-4435, daswaniclothiers.com



ALBIE YURAVICH

WOMEN'S WEAR
Morneault's Stackpole Moore Tryon
Hartford

Stackpole Moore Tryon was established in 1909 but the Morneaults have been running things successfully in downtown Hartford for 45 years. They feature designer clothes, custom-made options and formal wear, in addition to in-house fitting and tailoring.

860-522-0181, stackpolemooretryon.com

III General III

BOOKSTORE (USED)
The Book Barn
Niantic

More like Book Barns. The Main Barn started with three bookcases and a couch in 1988 and now there are four locations in Niantic and a collection of more than 500,000 books. The Downtown Shop has an eclectic selection, the Midtown Shop is quiet and peaceful, and Store Four has rare and out-of-print selections. The Book Barn is closed only on Thanksgiving and Christmas. Come on down, the store cats are waiting.

860-739-5715, bookbarnniantic.com

BOOKSTORE (NEW/INDIE)
Book Club Bookstore and More
South Windsor

860-432-7411, bookclubct.com

"Book Club Bookstore and More is my favorite indie bookstore because it is tremendously supportive of local authors and artisans, and provides a great place for the community to connect at the many diverse events hosted by the store. It's a small business with a huge heart!"

— Maria Carvalho, South Windsor

"I absolutely love Book Club Bookstore. There's a great variety of books and a ton of book discussions, workshops, classes, and other activities. They also support local authors and are very involved in community events."

— Jessica Bottomley, Broad Brook



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GIFTS

The Bowerbird

Old Lyme

The Bowerbird, which opened in 1989, "represents the quintessential family shopping experience." There are toys, books, clothes, soaps, jewelry, accessories, gourmet food, pet stuff, stationary, party supplies, trinkets, doodads, tchotchkes, the whole nine. It's stocked with "impulsive necessities" from more than 2,000 vendors. A beautiful touch is their gift wrap donation program. The Bowerbird charges a fee for wrapping and donates half of the proceeds from the entire year to local nonprofits.

860-434-3562, thebowerbird.com



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JEWELRY STORE

Becker's Diamonds and Fine Jewelry

West Hartford and Old Saybrook

Becker's was established in 1978 and in 2014 a second location was opened in Old Saybrook. The service is personal and professional, and invite-only events are held periodically for loyal customers. The West Hartford store has a goldsmith shop and a vast estate jewelry department, and each store has a service and repair studio. Becker's is a member of the Leading Jewelers Guild and Preferred Jewelers International.

West Hartford: 860-521-3202
Old Saybrook: 860-391-8281
beckers.com

PET SERVICES

The Barking Lot

RC

Hamden

203-764-2622, hamdenbarkinglot.com

No one likes to leave Fido behind … but if you must, the folks here will treat your furry family member like their own, with services from doggie daycare to overnight stays and long-term boarding. Pooches can play and socialize in a 3,000-square-foot outdoor playground filled with jungle gyms and dipping pools, and The Barking Lot actively supports local canine rescue groups.

TOY STORE

Amato's Toy and Hobby

New Britain and Middletown

For the classics, including die-cast model cars, flying model rockets, radio-controlled vehicles, wood blocks, and dolls, head to this shop that's been serving New Britain since the '50s and Middletown since 1940. You'll also find more modern stuff such as science kits. Here's some holiday cheer: the New Britain store was featured in a 2017 Lifetime movie, *A Very Merry Toy Store*, starring Mario Lopez and Melissa Joan Hart.

New Britain: 860-229-9069
amatosnewbritain.com
Middletown: 860-347-1893
amatosmiddletown.com



AMATO'S TOY AND HOBBY / NEW BRITAIN

Recreation

BIKE SHOP

Pedal Power

Berlin, Essex, Middletown and Vernon

With new trails opening all the time, the cycling options in Connecticut just keep getting better and better. Make sure you have the right gear to tackle all the miles out there. With four locations, Pedal Power has bikes to handle busy city streets or rocky mountain paths, and hybrids for those who want a bit of both. Also offering bike rentals and repairs, Pedal Power hosts weekly group rides where you can develop your pack mentality.

pedalpowerct.com

RUNNING GEAR

Sound Runner

Fairfield, Glastonbury, Old Saybrook, Branford

With three locations along the shoreline and one up in Glastonbury, Sound Runner will have you feeling like you're ready to run from store to store. They'll fit you for the right shoes and the proper headband, and take care of everything in between. Socks, shorts, shirts, sunglasses, water bottles, you name it. Trained staff will even take the time to analyze your gait to figure out what will work best for you.

soundrunner.com

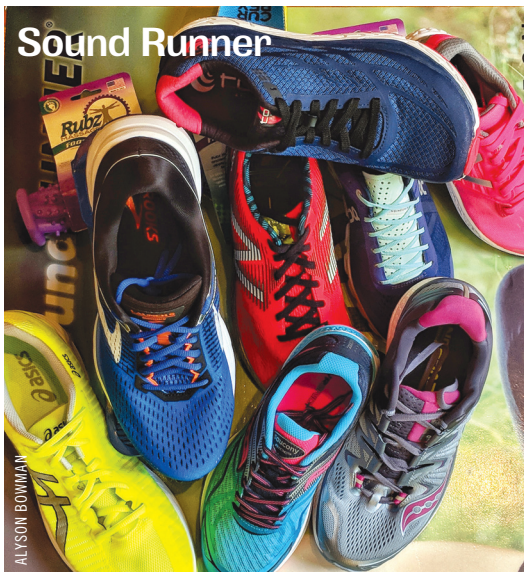
SPORTING GOODS

Farr's Sporting Goods

Manchester

With their selection of baseball and softball bats, it's no wonder Farr's went back-to-back in the sporting goods category. Whether your sport is indoors or outdoors, summer or winter, Farr's has everything you could imagine for major sports such as football and basketball all the way to frisbee golf, darts and yard games. Farr's is also the place for all the equipment you need for skiing, skating, sledding, camping, fishing and biking.

860-643-7111, farrssportinggoods.net



ALYSON BOWMAN

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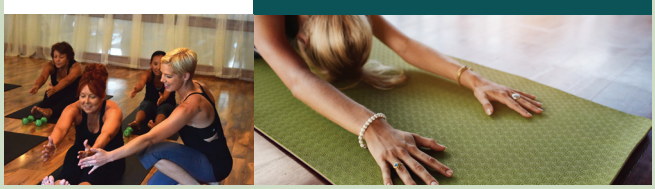
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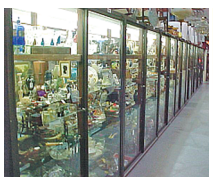


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Photo by Maring Visuals



A Taste of Place

Stone Silo's cheese artisan Katie Gilmore (right) hand-crafts cheese redolent of the lush Connecticut pastures her goats graze on. As her small goat herd produces milk during spring and summer, the Woodbury farm's offerings reflect abundance: fresh chèvre and feta abound. The summer's milk, come fall, is transformed into aged cheeses – evoking a taste of sun-warmed meadows in June. A discerning palate matched with a scrupulous buying ethic guides Lisa (left), our cheese aficionada, to seek out cheeses like Stone Silo's for New Morning's customers. Cheese made with one farm's season of milk has terrior, a taste of that place, just like fine wine. From our robust assortment of imported artisan-made cheeses to those produced locally, Lisa ensures that each cheese chosen meets our standards and, of course, is delicious.

New Morning's commitment to partnering with regional producers is evident throughout the store: from farm-fresh organic vegetables and small-batch grocery items to pastured, humanely-raised eggs and meat.

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Make It Grain

HOUSE-MILLED PASTA IS AT THE HEART OF CHESTER'S GRANO ARSO

BY ERIK OFGANG

It all began with a fire.

Back in the 18th century, before planting a new crop of grain, wealthy landowners in Puglia, the region on the southern heel of Italy's boot, would burn remaining shrubs from the previous year's crops to fertilize the soil and control weeds. According to pasta-making lore, they would then let poor villagers harvest the charred, smoky and unwanted grains that had not been completely consumed by flames. (The wealthy landowners of feudal Italy were not known for their generosity.) The peasants would grind these grains into flour for bread and pasta. Unbeknownst to the landowners, the bread and pasta made with this grain had a rich, nutty, smoky and dark taste. Grano arso, which translates to "burnt grain," was born.

Many decades later, and more than 4,000 miles and an ocean away from Puglia, this burnt peasant grain of Italy has inspired the name of Grano Arso in the quintessential New England river village of Chester. Opened in November by husband-and-wife team Joel and Lani Gargano, the restaurant specializes in house-made and milled pastas using rare grains sourced from



Rigatoni Bolognese *(top)* and shellfish brodetto. PHOTOS: MARA LAVITT

openings

A monthly look at some of what's new and exciting on the Connecticut dining scene

Astudillo's Place, Orange
Breakfast and lunch is served from the small location that was formerly home to the Roly Poly sandwich shop. Specialties include handmade burgers, fresh-cut french fries, omelettes and French toast. The restaurant is owned by Marcelo Astudillo. ***223 Boston Post Road, 203-795-1165, astudillosplace.com/orange_ct***

Walia Ethiopian Restaurant, Manchester
The increasingly robust dining scene in Manchester got its first Ethiopian restaurant when Walia opened in June. The cuisine is centered around the bread injera, which is made from teff, a gluten-free grain. The bread is used to wrap various veggies and meats, creating a delicious meal. ***836 Main St., 860-432-5246, waliaethiopianct.com***

The Hummus & Pita Co., Brookfield
The fast-casual Mediterranean cuisine chain The Hummus & Pita Co. opened its first Connecticut location, and its first location outside of New York City, on Aug. 2. The specialty is freshly baked pita and laffa breads as well as traditional meats. The restaurant will also offer its headline-grabbing Hummus Shake, a vegan "milk" shake made with hummus that we've yet to work up the courage to try. ***15 Federal Road, hummusandpitas.com***

Namoo, Kent
The scenic but rural village of Kent has a culinary scene that can already hold its own against the best dining districts in the state. With the arrival this summer of Namoo, a Korean takeout restaurant, it has gotten more diverse. The specialties include Korean barbecue, seafood dishes and sushi. ***13 Kent Green Blvd., 860-927-1122***

Bedford Hall, Stamford
One of the latest restaurants to join Stamford's already impressive list of eateries is Bedford Hall. The venue features pizza, burgers, sandwiches and dishes including steak and salmon. The 4,000-square-foot bar and restaurant has a modern industrial design. It is owned by Table 95 Hospitality Group, which owns Brother Jimmy's BBQ across the street and 20 other restaurants along the I-95 corridor in several states. The same firm owned the previous restaurant in the space, which was called Cantina. ***545 Bedford St., 203-973-7888, bedfordhallstamford.com***


Bedford Hall in Stamford

PHOTO: MICHAEL CUMMO

J.A. Bar & Grill, Hamden
Opened in May, J.A. Bar & Grill offers Jamaican food favorites like jerk chicken, oxtail, curry chicken and curry goat. In addition to the food, the venue features live music in various styles with karaoke on Thursday nights. Every week the restaurant hosts Margarita Sunday, with drink specials and live jazz. ***1372 Dixwell Ave., 475-238-6597, jabarandgrill.com***

Riley's by the Seawall, Stratford
This waterside restaurant in the Lordship section of Stratford offers great views and a lunch-and-dinner menu of seafood, salads, steaks, burgers and wings. There are more than 42 outdoor seats as well as indoor seating. The spot was formerly home to the Crabby Dog Tavern. New owners Richard Davis and Steve O'Neill hope to make the restaurant a community hub. ***14 Beach Drive, 203-693-9255, facebook.com/rileysbytheseawall***

La Familia, Canton
Bolivian cuisine is served fresh from high-quality ingredients at this Canton restaurant which opened in April. Specialties include dishes such as patasca (a traditional white corn pork soup), empanadas, and a variety of sandwiches and meats such as keperi (slow-cooked brisket served with yuca and rice). ***144 Albany Tpke., 860-693-6933, facebook.com/lafamiliabolivianrestaurant***

Know of a new Connecticut restaurant?
Email Erik Ofgang at eofgang@connecticutmag.com.









Lani and Joel Gargano, the owners of Grano Arso. Joel is also the chef.
At far left, peppercorn-seared duck breast. At left, insalata di fruiti de mare *(top)* and dulce de leche cheesecake.

REVIEW

Grano Arso

Chester

Connecticut, New England and beyond. These grains are crafted into rich, unique pasta styles including the grano arso variety that gave inspiration for the restaurant's name.

During our visit we tasted this incredible style of pasta in the form of the rye orecchiette. The orecchiette, cap-shaped pasta meaning "little ears," is made with rye from Still River Farm in Coventry that is toasted in house. The wheat-colored pasta is topped with pork sausage, escarole from Wellstone Farm in Higganum and a scoop of mascarpone. The pasta has that signature, rich flavor of grano arso toasted caramel combined with the gritty, earthy character of the rye. Another impressive pasta dish is the rigatoni Bolognese, made with beef from Blue Slope Farm in North Franklin.

The restaurant's relationship with grain extends beyond pasta and includes the delicious bread served to customers as they arrive, and a memorable, stone-milled polenta appetizer.

Joel Gargano, who is the head chef, learned to bake at his parents' Branford bakery, Cheri's Bakery, and went on to graduate from Johnson & Wales' culinary program. He honed his cooking chops at restaurants such as Providence's Chez Pascal and by working for Tyler Anderson at Millwright's in Simsbury and Jonathan Benno at Lincoln Ristorante in New York. It was at Lincoln that Gargano learned how beautiful fresh pasta can be, and the care that goes into making it.

"There's two camps on this idea of pasta: there's fresh and there's dry," Gargano says. "Depending on where you go in Italy, you're going to get a fresh product or a dried product. None is better or worse, it's just about what people do. For us, we wanted to have a lot of control over the products that we make. Meaning, if I felt inspired one day to include rye in my pasta, it might take me a very long time to find someone who makes rye pasta, right?"

He adds, "Grain is such an underutilized local ingredient. Growing a grain crop, there's not a lot of money to be made in that. There's not a lot of farmers that do it. So I'm really happy for the ones that do and I try my best to support them."

While pasta is the heart and soul of the restaurant, there is plenty more to recommend. With ingredients sourced from local farms and waters, there are intriguing options even for those destined for gluten-free existences. An example during our visit was the stracciatella, creamy mozzarella over local radishes.

The restaurant occupies a former bank built in the 1800s. Lani, a nurse by training who got into the restaurant business after marrying Joel, oversees a front of house that has an upscale vibe with an open and airy dining room and small bar area that seats 50. There is also an outdoor patio.

Lani says that, like nursing, owning a restaurant is all about hospitality.

"You still take care of people and you still try to make their lives better in some sort of way," she says. "I just fell in love with the industry and being able to make people happy with our food and service."

The bar features wine, beer and a wide range of cocktails that stand out for their quality in an increasingly competitive cocktail market. Lani's Martini and the Lower Manhattan were both creative takes on classic drinks.

Desserts such as panna cotta, budino and cappuccino gelato were all worthy caps to the meal. However, what stood out most were the pastas — pasta made with passion and care and from local and rare grains, steeped but not bound in the traditions of Italy, bursting with new and ancient flavors. That's tough to top at any restaurant.

Grano Arso

6 Main St., Chester
860-322-3143, granoct.com
Price range: Appetizers $8-$18, pasta $17-$30, large plates $28-$30, dessert $7-$10
Hours: Tue.-Thu. 5-9 p.m., Fri. 5-10 p.m., Sat. 11:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m., 5-10 p.m., Sun. brunch 11:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. (until the Chester Sunday Market stops in October). Closed Mon.
Wheelchair accessible

AMBIANCE Upscale and modern with high ceilings and lots of room. Good acoustics allow for easy conversation.

SERVICE Knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the cuisine. After we asked a few questions about the pasta-making process during the meal, we were invited to see the kitchen, a first for when we visit a restaurant incognito. Remember that reservations are preferred. Our party of three certainly picked up on this preference when we stopped in unannounced, even though we guessed correctly that there would be plenty of seating on a Tuesday night.

FOOD A modern take on classic Italian cuisine with local ingredients a major theme, with house-made pasta the heart and soul of the restaurant.



River of Dreams

THIS WATERFRONT RESTAURANT IN WETHERSFIELD WAS 35 YEARS IN THE MAKING | BY MIKE WOLLSCHLAGER

If the three most important things in buying real estate are location, location, location, Chris and Martha Henney checked off all three boxes when they built the CBS Xerox building on the bank of the Connecticut River in Wethersfield in 1983. It looks like your standard office building from the parking lot, but the views from the river side: anything but standard. The Henneys knew their piece of land on the west side of the river just north of the Putnam Bridge would be a big draw for companies seeking office space, but they also recognized it could be a dining destination for the hungry people of Greater Hartford.

"There is absolutely no reason in the world why we shouldn't have a spectacular restaurant somewhere along the back of the building overlooking the river," Chris Henney says, recalling conversations from the planning stages more than three decades ago. "So I want you to carve out a piece, and identify it as a location for a restaurant so that the town knows what our intentions are when we go in for approvals."

Thirty-five years later, River: A Waterfront Restaurant & Bar has finally opened. The Henneys, who married in 1989, had no intentions initially of actually being in the food business; they wanted to lease the space to a proven restaurateur. But there were non-negotiable contract stipulations the Henneys couldn't live without, and no lessee could live with. They "mothballed" the idea and used it as office space. Eventually their real estate portfolio grew to include full-service hotels with food and beverage, and that experience gave them the confidence to give it a go themselves.

Chris and Martha each took a year off to attend culinary school and pastry school and learn about restaurant management. "We really wanted to be able to understand the front of the house, the back of the house, and have an actual working knowledge," Chris says, "so that when we went into this we knew what was really going on and we could be more-informed owners." Martha jokingly adds, "If someone quit, we knew that we could at least cover for the night."

We visited River on a picturesque Wednesday evening that was made to order for outdoor dining. The place, which seats about 300 inside and out, was packed. The late-afternoon sun disappears over the seven-story building, resulting in an idyllic combination of light, shade, warmth and comfort. But what about the day before? A stormy Tuesday couldn't have been good for business, right?

"We still had over 100 people in the place," Chris says. "In the bad weather, the river takes on a different view altogether. And it's magnificent." Martha follows up with what amounts to a mission statement for River. "We'd like it to be a place where people come for the food and the service. Icing on the cake: It's got a fantastic view. So we were pleased to see that, to have people coming in when there's the threat of a tornado."

River's focus is on fresh pastas and wood-fired pizzas — "Let's face it," Chris



PHOTOS: MIKE WOLLSCHLAGER



Rigatoni meat pie with garlic bread puffs and a side order of lemon garlic gnocchi lurking in the background.

says, "the No. 1 cuisine always is Italian" — with elements of a steakhouse. The Henneys gave chef Paul Krawic their criteria and guidelines and he developed the menu. We went pasta-heavy for our order, but the pizzas will receive some attention the next time we're in town, ideally during the daily 3-6 p.m. happy hour. During that window there's a bit of a price break on pies ranging from margherita and vegetarian to buffalo chicken and white clam, in addition to drinks and traditional happy hour fare.

The sausage and kale soup ($6) was hearty and bursting with flavor and will be a must-order on any return visit. On the appetizer front, the tomato fondue that accompanies the traditional arancini ($8) sets it apart from versions served with run-of-the-mill marinara. Lemon garlic gnocchi and Parmesan risotto ($6 sides) were both rich, satisfying dishes cooked perfectly. The main course highlight was a rigatoni meat pie ($19), the essence of Italian comfort food, baked in a crock and served with garlic bread puffs.

Full belly, lovely evening, rolling river. Throw in a few zeppole ($6) with chocolate hazelnut and Grand Marnier crème, a cup of cappuccino and you'll find yourself in no hurry to head back to the parking lot side of the building.

River: A Waterfront Restaurant & Bar

100 Great Meadow Road, Wethersfield
860-257-3344, riverontheriver.com
Hours: Dinner: Sun.-Thu. 5-9 p.m.; Fri.-Sat. 5-10 p.m.; Lunch: 11 a.m.-3 p.m. daily; Bar: 11 a.m.-close daily.
Wheelchair accessible

Head to Harborview

A Hidden Neighborhood Gem Offering Breakfast, Lunch and Pastries in Bridgeport

UNDER THE RADAR

"Where is the water?"

I ask this question as we arrive at the Harborview Market on a recent afternoon and discover there are, in fact, no harbor views.

A moment later any lingering confusion over views or the lack thereof has been washed away by the smells of simple but good sandwiches and top-shelf baked goods. These aromas roll out of the restaurant and mingle with the sea-tinged air (you can't see it but Long Island Sound is only a few blocks away). There are wraps and omelettes, breakfast and lunch sandwiches, and croissants and cookies so good they once were named Best of Connecticut by this publication and will be in the running for future consideration.

A true local hangout, Harborview Market is nestled so deeply into its residential Black Rock neighborhood on Harborview Avenue (thus the name) it is almost invisible to outsiders. The business is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year. Michele Torres, who owns the restaurant with husband and longtime Bridgeport political figure Enrique "Rick" Torres, says they weren't sure the spot would make it until the era of GPS and social media.

"We're tucked in the neighborhood, so if you didn't know where we were, it was very hard to find. People would stumble upon us, and then tell their friends. Once people were able to find us, and we were able to put up Facebook posts and all that, it just kind of exploded."

When Michele and her husband opened the spot, they took over a grocery store. Originally they continued that portion of the business, but little by little grocery aisles were replaced by tables, and today the store has moved fully away from its grocery store past.

The specialty today is food and that neighborhood vibe. "Our focus has always been comfort food and giving people a quality product at a reasonable price. Things that the average person enjoys eating," Michele says.

Harborview Market continues to evolve. The cafe offers more gluten-free and vegetarian options than in the past, and is more frequently rented out for private events including showers.

Beyond the food, the spot has a warm, living room feel. Large tables fill up the inside and there is ample, tree-shaded seating on the quiet block outside. On Sunday mornings there is live music; the emphasis is on local musicians who perform original material. One of Michele and Rick's five children, singer-songwriter John Torres, is often among the performers.

Thanks to its combination of excellent food and neighborhood atmosphere, Harborview is a perfect pre- or post-beach stop. It really isn't too far from the harbor, and when you're hungry, the view here is far superior. | ERIK OFGANG |

Harborview Market

218 Harborview Ave., Bridgeport
203-367-7336, harborviewmarket.com
Hours: Mon.-Fri. 6 a.m.-5 p.m., Sat. 6 a.m.-4 p.m., Sun. 6:30 a.m.-2 p.m.
Wheelchair accessible



BEET & BLOSSOM PHOTO CO.

Tower of Power

RECIPE: A MONUMENT TO STEAK AND POTATOES BY CAFE ON THE GREEN'S ALEX HERNANDEZ | BY PAMELA BROWN

Steak and potatoes may seem like a rudimentary dish, but in the hands of chef Alex Hernandez it becomes the epitome of flavor and texture. "The secret to cooking the perfect filet mignon is to make sure you season it well with salt and pepper and combine pan-searing in a heavy skillet over high heat with an oven finish,"

CHEF'S SPECIAL

says Hernandez, head chef at Cafe on the Green, an upscale Italian restaurant on the grounds of Richter Park Golf Course in Danbury. "I've tried cooking strictly on the stovetop, but I feel it tends to overcook the steak and sometimes burn the outside of the filet. The oven is better at providing indirect heat while a quick, very hot searing gives you the much-desired, grilled and slightly charred edge. The stovetop and oven method is tried and true. It gives you a slightly crusted outside with a juicy tender inside."

Not your average meat entrée, seared filet mignon with grilled portobello mushroom and sautéed spinach is robust yet delicate. "Guests at the restaurant love the combination. It looks good and tastes good. The Gorgonzola goes so well together with the spinach. It's a good way to end the summer heat and get into some of the colder nights in September," says Hernandez, who suggests accompanying the entrée with a nice bottle of red wine, preferably a cabernet sauvignon, brunello or amarone, making it the perfect dish for any home cook. "All you need is a stovetop and an oven."



Growing up with a mother who was, Hernandez admits, not a great cook prompted him to pursue cooking. "I started cooking at a young age because I didn't like my mom's food. It was too plain. I like a little mild spice," he says. With no formal culinary training, Hernandez stepped into the kitchen at age 24, watched other chefs, and worked his way up to head chef at Cafe on the Green. "I started with sandwiches, then made fancier dishes. Cooking came easy to me and people kept telling me I was doing a great job, so I stuck with it."



Chef Alex Hernandez believes that a great meal should be a feast for the eyes as well as the palate.
PHOTOS: PAMELA BROWN

The filet mignon entrée showcases Hernandez's talent as a visual artist. Referencing the vertical layers of spinach, mushrooms and meat, he agrees most people eat with their eyes. "The tower with the different ingredients makes it look better. You see it first and it makes you want to try it. A nice presentation usually means the food is good, and I care that everything is done right."

Even after more than 22 years of cooking, Hernandez still finds enjoyment in creating a dish that pleases even the most discriminating palate. "When customers tell me it's excellent, I feel like, wow, I did it!" Hernandez says. "I'm happy. I love cooking."

SEARED FILET MIGNON WITH PORTOBELLO MUSHROOM AND SPINACH TOWER

Yield: 2 servings
Cooking time: 30 minutes

INGREDIENTS

2 10-ounce tenderloin beef filets (roughly 2 inches thick)
2-3 tablespoons unsalted butter
Salt and pepper to taste
9 tablespoons olive oil (3 for each vegetable)
1 cup fresh, rinsed spinach
2 large portobello mushrooms, stem removed
1 clove garlic, chopped
1 oz. chicken stock
¼ cup heavy cream
2 oz. Gorgonzola cheese, crumbled
2 oz. chopped onion

DIRECTIONS

1. Drizzle olive oil and salt and pepper on inside of mushroom caps with stems removed. Place on cooking sheet and bake at 350 degrees for 25 minutes until soft. Flip halfway through to cook evenly.
2. Remove steak from the refrigerator 30 minutes before cooking to bring it to room temperature and ensure cooking times are accurate. Season both sides generously with salt and pepper.
3. Add the butter to an oven-safe, cast-iron skillet over high heat, allowing the skillet to become scorching hot first. Place the filets face down and sear undisturbed for 2 minutes. Flip the filets and sear for an additional 2 minutes.
4. Transfer the skillet directly to the oven at 415 degrees. For rare, bake for 4-5 minutes; medium rare, 5-6 minutes; medium, 6-7 minutes; medium well, 20 minutes; well, 25 minutes. Remove filets from the skillet and set on a plate and lightly cover with aluminum foil and let sit for 5 minutes before serving to bring the steak to its final serving temperature.
5. In sauté pan over medium heat, combine olive oil with chopped garlic and cook for 3 minutes. Add rinsed spinach to pan and cook for 3-4 minutes until desired texture.
6. In separate sauté pan over medium heat, add olive oil and chopped onions. Cook until slightly brown. Add chicken stock, heavy cream and Gorgonzola cheese. Over low heat, reduce mixture for 5-7 minutes until it becomes slightly thicker.
7. Lay the spinach on the bottom of the dish, layer the portobello mushroom, and place the seared filet mignon with spoonfuls of sauce on top.

POTATO WEDGES

INGREDIENTS

1 potato cut into 6 wedges
3 tablespoons olive oil
3 tablespoons corn starch
Salt and pepper to taste

DIRECTIONS

1. Toss the potato wedges in olive oil, then in corn starch, salt and pepper; coat well.
2. Place in 350-degree oven for 25-30 minutes. Turn once while in oven.

Serve potato wedges on the side.

Craft Crop

With Tobacco Becoming Less Lucrative, One of the Country's Oldest Farming Families is Turning to Grains for Beer and Booze

CRAFT CRUISING
Exploring Craft Culture One Drink and Story at a Time

One hundred and forty-two years before Connecticut joined the Union, William Thrall established what would become the Thrall family farm in Windsor in 1646. Ownership of the farm was passed down from parent to child over the centuries.

As the 1900s dawned, Oliver Thrall helped pioneer the growing of shade tobacco using an innovative technique that decreased the crop's sun exposure and increased humidity, creating an elite cigar wrapper that is still sought after.

For more than 100 years, shade tobacco was the farm's mainstay, but recently Connecticut-grown shade tobacco has faced stiff competition from countries such as Honduras and Ecuador. Farmers there grow "Connecticut seed" tobacco, and hourly wages for workers planting and harvesting the labor-intensive crop are much lower, resulting in cheaper prices than shade tobacco actually grown in Connecticut.

A few years ago this shift in the market caused brothers Spencer and Joseph Thrall, who are the 12th generation to run the farm owned by the family business, O.J. Thrall Inc., to explore replacing some of their shade tobacco with another crop. Through chance encounters with local brewers and brewery owners they learned about the desire for Connecticut-grown products in beer. They considered hops but felt the demand wasn't great enough to devote several hundred acres to the crop. Instead they decided to grow barley and other grains, such as rye, used in the brewing or distilling process, and to open the first malt house in Connecticut in the modern era.

Three hundred acres of the 600-acre farm have been converted from shade tobacco to barley, wheat and other grains. Thrall Family Malt celebrated its first barley harvest last November. The farm's new product has already made its way into beers from more than two dozen Connecticut breweries including Kinsmen, Kent Falls, Fox Farm, Back East, Broken Symmetry and Two Roads.



Spencer Thrall, co-owner of O.J. Thrall Inc.
PHOTO: ERIK OFGANG

Spencer Thrall says that in the past brewers could only get malt from a few giant malt companies. "Now craft brewers want to have local craft ingredients to brew with."

The Thrall family's entrance into malting could be the beginning of a new grain movement in Connecticut. Grain grows abundantly well in the state and is planted by many farms as a cover crop. Since Thrall started, another malt house, Rooster Malt Co., has opened in Bethel.

In July, just before harvest for the spring crops, one of Thrall's barley fields on River Street in Windsor is a sea of golden-brown bristles. The brilliant crop wraps around several iconic dark-red tobacco barns and is flanked by a field of broad-leaf tobacco, a green and leafy plant that could be mistaken for spinach from a distance. It's a stunning snapshot of both the classic and the new crop on this so-old-as-to-be-almost-ancient family farm.

Across the street is the actual malt house. It is housed inside a former tobacco warehouse now home to a brewery's worth of silver vats and equipment. Here the malting process occurs as those golden barley grains are put in water so they sprout, then dried so they don't continue sprouting.

The process is long, Spencer says, but it's worth it, especially when he gets to enjoy the fruits of his crop in a beer made by a Connecticut brewery.

"It's always very gratifying to taste the final product of all the work," he says with a smile.

| ERIK OFGANG |
thrallfamilymalt.com



Caputo Pie

PHOTOS: TONY DUBE

A Good Bet

CAPUTO TRATTORIA: A NEW FOXWOODS RESTAURANT THAT TRANSCENDS ITS CASINO SETTING | BY ERIK OFGANG

It's hard to escape the feeling of being at a casino while you're there. There's the low but ever-present music pumping out of the loudspeakers, the whirring, buzzing, and cha-chinging of hundreds of slot machines, the shouting from card dealers and patrons, and at Connecticut's casinos, at least, the familiar but almost forgotten smell of cigarettes in a public place.

But step inside Caputo Trattoria at Foxwoods Resort Casino and these simultaneously frustrating and delightful casino sights and sounds disappear. They're swept away by a large restaurant with an open, airy design and bright color scheme. The many booths are striped white and yellow, the standalone chairs and bar are a sky blue, and the place is unmistakably coastal and chic.

Caputo Trattoria opened in May in Foxwoods' Grand Pequot Tower in the space formerly home to Al Dente.

"We brought in a company from New York to help design and bring it up to date," executive chef Gary LaMothe says. "We tried to go with a coastal, real bright, open feel."

Like the space itself, the cuisine is a breath of fresh air. Caputo is owned by Craveable Hospitality Group, which owns David Burke Prime next door, where LaMothe worked in the kitchen for the past decade. Prior to working at David Burke Prime, LaMothe spent 12 years at various restaurants within the casino and helped to open Paragon on the 24th floor, which has since been replaced with the restaurant Vue 24.

In preparation for opening Caputo, LaMothe traveled to Italy, exploring Milan, Florence and Rome. When he returned, he helped create a menu focused on house-made fresh pasta.

"I'm in love with all the pasta," he says. "It has silkiness but it's still got some bite to it. With fresh pasta, usually you can't serve it al dente because fresh pasta is not firm enough, but we've got a nice texture to ours."

Another favorite of LaMothe's is the Caputo Pie ($49), chicken parmesan served pizza-style with marinara, mozzarella and hot honey that feeds two to eight people. There's also cacio e pepe ($19), spaghetti with black pepper and parmesan, made tableside, and a wide assortment of classic Italian dishes from various pastas to eggplant parmesan ($28) and chicken Milanese ($28). There are also gluten-free options.

During my visit, LaMothe served a complimentary menu of beef carpaccio with aioli, pickled shallots and capers ($16), crispy arancini with red wine-braised short rib ($15), and taleggio ricotta ravioli with roasted asparagus, lemon, cultured butter ($19), and a side of meatballs. All the dishes were winners. True to LaMothe's word the ravioli was al dente, and the meatballs, doused in a classic, rich red sauce, were crave-inducing.

The restaurant offers a three-course prix fixe menu for $39 most days of the week, with a discount to $32 on Tuesdays.

My meal was capped by a delicious and creamy coconut gelato, imported from Italy, and a glass of the house-made limoncello that was better tasting and less sweet than many I've tried.

"We take lemon peels off and soak them in vodka for 30 days and we add simple syrup," LaMothe says. "It makes a delicious limoncello. It's not overly yellow like you'll see in commercial limoncellos; they add food coloring to make it yellow. The more clear and see-through it is, the better the quality."

The beverage program is completed by a wine list curated by David Burke Prime's sommelier, and a variety of craft cocktails such as the limoncello fizz with that house-made limoncello, ginger beer and prosecco.

A complimentary limoncello is provided with the check as well as a cotton candy dessert. The cotton candy provides a quirky and enjoyable close to the meal and a fun reminder that, yes, you are in a casino after all.

Caputo Trattoria

Foxwoods, Grand Pequot Tower, restaurant level
860-312-2788, foxwoods.com/caputo-trattoria
Hours: Mon.-Thu. 4-10 p.m., Fri. 4-11 p.m., Sat. noon-11 p.m., Sun. noon-10 p.m.
Wheelchair accessible

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dining guide

SEPTEMBER 2018



Fairfield 84
Hartford 86
Litchfield 87
Middlesex 88
New Haven 88
New London 90
Tolland 91
Windham 91

Fairfield County

Archie Moore's Bar & Restaurant • ***American*** • **RC** Casual pub-style dining with burgers, nachos and salads. And don't miss the award-winning buffalo chicken wings. • 48 Sanford St., Fairfield, 203-256-9295 *archiemoores.com.* Open daily. L D LS, $

Artisan • ***New England*** A farm-to-table restaurant with New England-inspired seasonal cuisine. • 275 Old Post Road, Southport, 203-259-2800 *artisansouthport.com.* Open daily. L D SB, $$, WA

b Restaurants • ***Burgers*** Gourmet burgers and a wide selection of beers and bourbons, with unique local offerings at each location. • 1262 Post Road, Fairfield, 203-955-1208; 230 Tresser Blvd., Stamford, 203-964-8353 *burgersbeerbourbon.com.* Open daily. L D LS, SB (Fairfield only), $, WA

Bar Sugo • ***Italian*** • **EP RC** This beloved Italian restaurant bills itself as the place where "modern Italian meets peasant food." That philosophy shines through in its delicious offerings. • 102 Wall St., Norwalk, 203-956-7134 *barsugo.com.* Closed Mon. D SB, $$, WA

Barbarie's Black Angus • ***American*** • **EP RC** Elegant yet cozy atmosphere offering high quality, dry-aged steak on premises, as well as seafood and appetizers paired with an extensive wine list. Expansive brunch, lunch and dinner menu. Reservations recommended. • 5 Eagle St., Danbury, 203-826-7406 *beststeakhousedanburyct.com.* Open daily. L D LS SB, $$, WA

Barcelona Restaurant & Wine Bar • ***Spanish Mediterranean*** • **EP RC** Hip restaurant serving Spanish and Mediterranean cuisine — including tapas, hot and cold. • 4180 Black Rock Tpke., Fairfield, 203-255-0800; 515 West Ave., Norwalk, 203-854-5600; 222 Summer St., Stamford, 203-348-4800 *barcelonawinebar.com.* Open daily. L (Fairfied & Stamford) D LS SB, $$, WA

Basso Cafe • ***Mediterranean*** Casual fine dining establishment offering Mediterranean Latin fusion cuisine in a cozy and chic atmosphere. Bar offers a full wine, beer and craft cocktail list. • 124 New Canaan Ave., Norwalk, 203-354-6566 *bassobistrocafe.com.* Closed Mon. L (Tues.-Sat.), D, $$$

The Blind Rhino • ***American*** • **EP RC** Sports bar features a small but diverse and flavorful menu, plus a shuffleboard table and 27 big-screen TVs. • 15 N. Main St., Norwalk, 203-956-7243 *theblindrhino.com.* Open daily. L (Fri-Sun) D, $, WA

Bloodroot • ***Vegetarian*** • **EP** Offers a seasonal menu that might include Vietnamese summer rolls, the Bloodroot burger and Mexican mole. • 85 Ferris St., Bridgeport, 203-576-9168 *bloodroot.com.* Closed Mon. L (Tues., Thurs.-Sat.) D SB, $$, WA

Butcher's Best Country Market • ***Deli*** • **RC** Meats are hand-selected, trimmed and cooked, prepared take-home or in your favorite sandwich to go. Traditional and special salads are also available. • 125 S. Main St., Newtown, 203-364-0013 *butchersbestmarket.com.* Closed Sun. L, $

The Capital Grille • ***Steakhouse*** • **EP RC** High-end steakhouse chain offering dry-aged steaks, fresh seafood and world-class wines. Reservations recommeded. • 230 Tresser Blvd., Stamford, 203-967-0000 *thecapitalgrille.com.* Open daily. L (Mon-Fri) D LS, $$$, WA

Coromandel Cuisine of India • ***Indian*** • **RC** Wide range of tasty Indian fare is served in a small, tastefully done space. • 25-11 Old Kings Hwy. N., Darien, 203-662-1213; 316 South Main St., Newtown, 203-426-7143; 68 Broad St., Stamford, 203-964-1010; 17 Pease Ave., Southport, 203-259-1213 *coromandelcuisine.com.* Derby & Southport closed Mon. L D, $$, WA

The Cottage • ***New American*** • **EP RC** Creative take on American cooking offers a seasonal menu of hand-crafted dishes, inspired by techniques and cultures from various regions around the globe. Reservations recommended. • 256 Post Road E, Westport, 203-557-3701 *thecottagewestport.com.* Closed Mon. D SB, $$$, WA

Ecco Rooftop Eatery • ***American*** • **EP** Located just above La Zingara, this casual spot serves up seasonal American cuisine in an airy, light-filled space with a retractable glass roof for al fresco dining. • 8 P T Barnum Square, Bethel, 203-744-7500 *eccorooftop.com.* Closed Tues. L D SB, $$, WA

Edo II • ***Asian*** • **EP** Korean and Japanese fare served up in a cozy atmosphere. • 32 Padanaram Road, Danbury, 203-743-8799. Closed Mon. L (Tues-Sat) D, $$

El Segundo • ***Global*** • **EP** Small plates of "global street food" with flavors from places all over the world, in a fun, hip atmosphere. • 3 N Water St, Norwalk, 203-939-9765 *elsegundosono.com.* Open daily. L D LS, $, WA

Elm • ***American*** Drawing inspiration from a local network of farmers and artisans, the inventive and seasonally inspired cuisine here is made with the freshest local, top-quality ingredients and served in an elegant, minimalist environment. • 73 Elm St., New Canaan, 203-920-4994 *elmrestaurant.com.* Open daily. L (Mon-Fri) D SB, $$$, WA

Flipside Burgers & Bar • ***American*** Flipside features creative burgers, appetizers, salads & cocktails. Happy Hour Monday-Saturday 3-6pm in the bar featuring 1/2 priced drinks & $3 small plates. • 1125 Post Road, Fairfield, 203-292-8233 *flipsiderestaurant.com.* Open daily. L D, $$, WA

Frank Pepe Pizzeria Napoletana • ***Pizza*** • **EP RC** The coal-fired brick oven which makes the legendary thin-crust pizza at the original Pepe's has been carefully replicated in their satellite locations. • 238 Commerce Drive, Fairfield, 203-333-7373; 59 Federal Road, Danbury, 203-790-7373 *pepespizzeria.com.* Open daily. L D, $, WA

Homestead Inn — Thomas Henkelmann • ***French*** Upscale French restaurant features impeccable service, comfortable surroundings, an extensive wine list and creative French food. • 420 Field Point Road, Greenwich, 203-869-7500 *homesteadinn.com/thomas-henkelmann.* Closed Sun.-Mon. L (Tue-Fri), D, $$$, WA

Hoodoo Brown BBQ • ***American*** • **EP RC** This laid-back barbecue bar and restaurant features a delicious blend of Texas, Kansas City, Carolina and other styles that will leave you craving more. • 967 Ethan Allen Hwy., Ridgefield, 203-438-6033 *hoodoobrownbbq.com.* Closed Mon. L (Fri-Sun) D LS, $, WA

CONNECTICUT Magazine's restaurant listings are presented as a service to our readers. Information on specialties, prices, etc., was supplied by the restaurateurs. Space limitations in this guide prevent us from describing every restaurant in the state; omission is not intended to reflect upon the quality of an establishment. The listings include restaurants we know and love, and those recommended to us by our readers. Average entrée prices are based on dinner entrées: $ — inexpensive (under $15); $$ — moderate ($15-$25); $$$ — expensive (over $25). This guide is updated regularly, but it is suggested that prices and hours be verified by phone. B (Breakfast); L (Lunch); D (Dinner); LS (Late Supper); SB (Sunday Brunch); E (Live Entertainment); WA (Wheelchair Access); **EP** = 2018 Experts' Pick; **RC** = 2018 Readers' Choice.

Ichiro • ***Sushi*** Ichiro offers a combination of Asian fusion, sushi and hibachi entrees. Enjoy the full-service bar and the shows put on by the hibachi chef. • 69 Newtown Road, Danbury, 203-792-8881 *ichirodanbury.com.* Open daily. L D LS, $$, WA

Joseph's Steakhouse • ***American*** • **EP** Known for a New York-style steakhouse experience with gems such as prime dry-aged beef. • 360 Fairfield Ave., Bridgeport, 203-337-9944 *josephssteakhouse.com.* Open daily. L (Mon-Fri) D, $$$, WA

Kawa Ni • ***Asian*** • **EP RC** A creative interpretation of pan-Asian cuisine and culture, styled after a Japanese pub and using locally grown ingredients. • 19A Bridge Square, Westport, 203-557-8775 *kawaniwestport.com.* Closed Mon. L (Tue-Sat) D LS, $$$, WA

Kotobuki Japanese Cuisine • ***Sushi*** • **RC** Rated "one of the best sushi restaurants" by Zagat for the past two decades, Kotobuki offers high-quality, classically prepared and authentic Japanese food. Reservations suggested. • 457 Summer St., Stamford, 203-359-4747 *kotobukijapaneserestaurant.com.* Closed Mon. L (Tue-Fri) D, $$, WA

Le Fat Poodle • ***French*** • **EP** Enjoy Southern, Latin, and globally flavored French cuisine in an upscale dining room or on the 30-seat outdoor patio. • 20 Arcadia Road, Old Greenwich, 203-717-1515 *lefatpoodle.com.* Open daily. L D SB, $$$, WA

Local Kitchen and Bar • ***American*** Craft beer is the name of the game here with more than 30 lines including rare local, national and international gems. There is also a full menu of classic American cuisine. • 68 Washington St., Norwalk, 203-957-3352; 85 Mill Plain Road, Fairfield, 203-955-1919 *sonolocal.com, fairfieldlocal.com.* Open daily. L D SB, $$, WA

Luc's Cafe • ***French*** • **EP** An authentic French bistro offering non-stop service from 11 a.m. on, with terrace dining available in the warmer months. • 3 Big Shop Lane, Ridgefield, 203-894-8522 *lucscafe.com.* Closed Sun. L D, $$$, E, WA

Market Place Kitchen & Bar • ***American*** Featuring American farm-to-table cuisine with a locally sourced menu. • 33 Mill Plain Road, Danbury, 203-616-5836 *marketplacedanbury.com.* Open daily. L D LS, $$, WA

Mexicali Rose • ***Mexican*** • **EP** Authentic Mexican food that reflects the rustic tastes of Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula and freshness of the ingredients. • 71 S Main St. #1, Newtown, 203-270-7003 *mexicalirosenewtown.com/.* Closed Mon. L D, $, WA

New Wok • ***Chinese*** • **RC** Chinese dishes such as Fisherman's Casserole and Crispy Walnut Shrimp & Chicken draw inspiration from Szechuan, Hunan, Malaysian, and Thai cuisine. • 228 S Main St # D16, Newtown, CT 06470, 203-270-3738 *newwokrestaurant.weebly.com.* Open daily. L D, $, WA

Nom-eez, Bridgeport • ***Vietnamese*** • **EP** Traditional Vietnamese cuisine and street food made from fresh, clean-tasting ingredients prepared with playful, sometimes quirky creativity. • 2992 Fairfield Ave, Bridgeport, 203-923-8686 *nom-eez.com.* Closed Mon. B (Fri-Sun) L D, $, WA

Note Kitchen & Bar, Bethel • ***American*** Modern American cuisine fused with international influences and paired with wines, craft beers, artisan cocktails, and soulful music. Menu changes frequently based on seasons and availability of ingredients. • 227 Greenwood Ave, Bethel, 203-917-3411 *notekitchen.com.* Open daily. L & D (Mon-Sat) SB, $$$, E, WA

Nouveau Monde Wine Bar & Bistro • ***American*** • **EP RC** This stylish bistro serves elevated American comfort food with an elegant ambiance. Seasonal entrées are served with a wine list with dozens of wines by the glass and well over 100 by the bottle, along with a curated craft beer, spirits, port and sherries list. • 6 Washington Ave, Sandy Hook, 203-491-2723 *nouveaumondewinebar.com.* Open daily. D SB, $$, WA

Pho Vietnam • ***Vietnamese*** • **RC** A family-owned restaurant serving authentic Vietnamese food with fresh produce, choice meats and seafood. • 56 Padanaram Road, Danbury, 203-743-6049 *phovietnamrestaurant.com.* Open daily. L D, $$, WA

Pink Sumo • ***Sushi*** • **RC** Specializes in world-class sushi and sashimi, using only the freshest seafood and ingredients. • 4 Church Lane, Westport, 203-557-8080 *pinksumoct.com.* Open daily. L D, $$

PizzaCo • ***Pizza*** • **EP** This converted gas station offers up personal-sized specialty pizzas ranging from traditional to brunch and dessert pies. • 1625 Stratford Ave., Stratford, 203-612-7520 *pizzacostratford.com.* Closed Mon. L D LS, $, WA

Positano Ristorante • ***Italian*** This restaurant has been owned and operated by the Scarpati family since 1999. Owner and chef Giuseppe Scarpati was born on the island of Ponza, Italy, and his cuisine focuses on all-natural cooking, with fresh fishes, meats, fruits, vegetables, and aromatic herbs. • 27 Powers Court, Westport, 203-454-4922 *positanosrestaurantwestport.com.* Open daily. L D SB, $$, E

Prime • ***Steak*** • **EP** Classic favorites in this striking décor include raw bar, mizu sushi, USDA prime steaks and chops, surf & turf and hand-made desserts, plus a wide and diverse wine list • 78 Southfield Ave, Stamford, 203-817-0700 *restaurantprime.com/stamford.* Open daily. L (Mon.-Fri.) D SB, $$$

Red Rooster Pub • ***American*** • **RC** American comfort food and family fare such as steaks, burgers, pizza, chops, ribs and much more, served in a rustic decor atmosphere. • 160 S. Main St., Newtown, 203-270-0788 *redroosterpubnewtown.com.* Open daily. L D SB, $$, WA

Roberto's • ***Italian*** Excellent Italian food with attentive service, plus catering and a full-service banquet facility. • 505 Main St., Monroe, 203-268-5723 *robertosmonroe.com.* Open daily. L (Sun) D, $$, WA

Sal e Pepe Contemporary Italian Bistro • ***Northern Italian*** • **RC** Offers superb cuisine with a contemporary flair, from fresh pastas and sauces to unique specials and classics with a modern twist. • 97 South Main St., Newtown, 203-426-0805 *salepeperestaurant.com.* Open daily. L (Mon-Fri) D, $$, WA

The Schoolhouse at Cannondale • ***American*** • **EP** With the motto "Fine. Fresh. Simple," the owners seek out the best sources of ingredients and treat them simply and with respect. • 34 Cannon Road, Wilton, 203-834-9816 *schoolhouseatcannondale.com.* Closed Mon. L (Fri-Sat) D (Wed-Sat) SB, $$$, WA

The Sitting Duck Tavern • ***American*** Neighborhood tavern committed to using regionally and locally grown produce and products. • 3694 Main St., Stratford, 203-873-0871 *sittingducktavern.com.* Open daily. L D LS SB, $$, WA

The Spinning Wheel • ***American*** • **RC** Enjoy a quintessentially New England-inspired menu with seasonal specials, local and homegrown accents, and modern adaptations of traditional comfort dishes. This classic-style pub has 12 types of beer on tap, a rum-inspired drink menu and is housed within a renovated historic saltbox style house that dates back to 1742. • 109 Black Rock Tpke., Redding, 203-664-4000 *swredding.com.* Closed Mon. L (Thu-Sat) D SB, $$$, WA

Stanziato's • ***Pizza*** Wood-fired pizza made using organic, seasonal ingredients from local farms and artisans. • 35 Lake Ave. Ext., Danbury, 203-885-1057 *stanziatos.com.* Closed Sun. L (Mon-Fri) D, $, WA

Taproot • ***New American*** • **EP** Open and roomy space where lots of different inspirations come together in excellent dishes that are influenced by what products are in season. Reservations recommended. • 269 Greenwood Ave., Bethel, 475-329-5395 *taprootct.com.* Closed Sun. & Mon. D SB, $$, WA

Tequila Mockingbird • ***Mexican*** The food here is made with traditional ingredients when possible, including imported chiles. Tequila is taken seriously as well, with bartenders receiving tequila training in Mexico. • 6 Forest St., New Canaan, 203-966-2222 *tequilamockingbirdnc.com.* Open daily. D, $$, WA

Thai Spice • ***Thai*** • **RC** Traditional Thai recipies including Pad Thai, Big Bowl Soup, Summer Shrimp Rolls and Papaya Salad. • 345 Main Ave, Norwalk, 203-846-3533 *thaispicenorwalk.com.* Open daily. L D, $, WA

Toro • ***Sushi*** • **EP RC** Open sushi bar, plus Japanese, Chinese and hibachi menu in a modern Asian decorated atmosphere. • 28 Churchill Road, Newtown, 203-364-0099 *bestasianfoodnewtown.com.* Open daily. L D, $$, WA

Wafu Asian Bistro • ***Asian*** Upscale dining with a frequently changing menu that utilizes local ingredients. • 3671 Post Road, Southport, 203-254-2288 *wafuasianbistro.com.* Open daily. L D, $, WA

Walrus + Carpenter • ***Barbecue*** • **EP** Sink your teeth into the barbecue offered at this sleek eatery in the Black Rock section of Bridgeport. The customer favorite is the Notorious P.I.G. • 2895 Fairfield Ave., Bridgeport, 203-333-2733 *walruscarpenterct.com.* Closed Mon. L (Wed-Sun) D LS, $$, E WA

Washington Prime • ***American*** • **EP RC** The land and sea menu has elements of Americana with cross-cultural influences. The restaurant also boasts an impressive beverage program. • 141 Washington St., South Norwalk, 203-857-1314 *washingtonprimect.com.* Open daily. L (Wed-Sun) D SB, $$$, WA

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Hartford County

Artisan • ***New England*** A farm-to-table restaurant with New England-inspired seasonal cuisine. • 1 Memorial Road, West Hartford, 860-937-2525 *artisansouthport.com*. Open daily. L D SB, $$$, WA

@ the Barn • ***American*** This 170-seat, 4,000-square-foot ultra-sleek steakhouse and wine bar features multiple dining areas, steaks, seafood, small plates and a wine list selected by a certified sommelier, as well as a wide array of martinis, specialty cocktails and craft beers. • 17R E. Granby Road, Granby, 860-413-3888 *atthebarngranby.com*. Closed Mon. L D (Tues.-Sun.) SB, $$, WA

Àvert Brasserie • ***French*** • **EP** Experience old-world European charm and beautiful, classic food combined with imagination, perfectionism and zest. • 35 LaSalle Road, West Hartford, 860-904-6240 *avertbrasserie.com*. Open daily. L D LS SB, $$, WA

b Restaurants • ***Burgers*** Gourmet burgers and a wide selection of beers and bourbons, with unique local offerings at each location. • 120 Hebron Ave. #6, Glastonbury, 860-430-9737; 4 Railroad St., Simsbury, 860-658-4477; 138 Park Road, West Hartford, 860-231-1199 *burgersbeerbourbon.com*. Open daily. L D LS, SB (Glastonbury only), $, WA

Barcelona Restaurant & Wine Bar • ***Spanish Mediterranean*** • **EP RC** Hip restaurant serving Spanish and Mediterranean cuisine — including tapas, hot and cold. • 971 Farmington Ave., West Hartford, 860-218-2100 *barcelonawinebar.com*. Open daily. D LS SB, $$, E, WA

Carbone's Kitchen • ***Italian*** Established in 2012, this casual-dining little brother to Carbone's Ristorante uses fresh and local ingredients to prepare old-school Italian classics. • 6 Wintonbury Mall, Bloomfield, 860-904-2111 *carboneskitchen.com*. Open daily. L (Mon.-Fri.) D, $$, WA



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Carbone's Ristorante • ***Italian*** This old-school, fine-dining Italian restaurant was established in 1938 and has survived as long as it has for a reason. Dishes include lobster pappardelle, grilled scottish salmon and eggplant, and veal cuscinetto. • 588 Franklin Ave., Hartford, 860-296-9646 *carbonesct.com*. Closed Sun. L (Mon.-Fri.) D, $$$, WA

Chip's Family Restaurant • ***American*** Famous for its perfect pancakes, Chip's also has a creative lunch and dinner menu, and guests are welcome to BYOB. • 99 Executive Blvd., Southington, 860-276-2429; 1301 Silas Deane Hwy., Wethersfield, 860-757-3500 *chipsrestaurants.com*. Open daily. B L D, $, WA

The Corner Pug • ***Irish Pub*** Classic favorites at this pug-themed pub include shepherd's pie, hot grilled Reubens, creamy chicken pot pies with flaky crusts, and authentic English fish and chips. • 1046 New Britain Ave., West Hartford, 860-231-0241 *cornerpug.com*. Open daily. L D SB, $

Cugino's • ***Italian*** Upscale casual dining spot offering steak and seafood, and Italian specialties such as chicken piccata and veal alla champignon. Reservations recommended. • 1053 Farmington Ave., Farmington, 860-678-9366 *cuginosrestaurantfarmington.com*. Closed Mon. (except by appt.) L D LS, $$

El Pollo Guapo • ***Spanish*** • **EP** The menu at this spot from the owners of Mercado offers rotisserie chicken with an attitude, as well as a delicious garlic-lime aioli accent to compliment many of the dishes. • 1866 Berlin Tpke., Wethersfield, 860-436-4982 *elpolloguapo.com*. Open daily. L D, $, L D

El Pulpo Restaurant & Tapas Bar • ***Mediterranean*** Paella de mariscos and Vieiras a la Plancha (grilled diver sea scallops and lobster over fray fontina cheese risotto and champagne sauce) are among the highlights of this romantic restaurant. • 1217 Queen St., Southington, 860-410-1147 *elpulpotapasbar.com*. Closed Mon. L D LS, $$

Firebox • ***New American*** Firebox boasts a seasonal, Connecticut farm-inspired menu including seared Stonington scallops and Connecticut farm-raised lamb. • 539 Broad St., Hartford, 860-246-1222 *fireboxrestaurant.com*. Closed Mon. L (Mon-Fri) D SB, $$$, WA

Frank Pepe Pizzeria Napoletana • ***Pizza*** • **EP RC** The coal-fired brick oven which makes the legendary thin-crust pizza at the original Pepe's has been carefully replicated in their satellite locations. • 221 Buckland Hills Drive, Manchester, 860-644-7333; 1148 New Britain Ave., West Hartford, 860-236-7373 *pepespizzeria.com*. Open daily. L D, $, WA

GoldBurgers • ***Burgers*** • **EP** The big (with a capital B) juicy specialties at GoldBurgers are all made with locally sourced beef and include the venue's namesake, the GoldBurger, a monster of a burger made with two patties and crowned by potato chips. • 1096 Main St., Newington, 860-665-0478 *goldburgers.com*. Open daily. L D, $, WA

Great Taste • ***Chinese*** • **EP** Multiregional Chinese cuisine in a space suitable for intimate gathering, family get-togethers or large-scale celebrations. • 597 W Main St, New Britain, CT 06053, 860-827-8988 *greattaste.com*. Open daily. L D LS, $$, WA

J. Timothy's Taverne • ***Gastropub*** • **EP RC** This historic pub offers up casual fare such as the famous "dirt wings," prime rib, chicken pot pie and French onion soup. • 143 New Britain Ave, Plainville, 860-747-6813 *jtimothys.com*. Open daily. L D LS, $$, WA

Max Downtown • ***American*** Features global cuisine, chophouse classics, a fine wine list and lighter fare in the tavern. • 185 Asylum St., Hartford, 860-522-2530 *maxdowntown.com*. Open daily. L (Mon.-Fri.) D LS, $$$, WA

Max Fish • ***Seafood*** Lively, upscale fish house serving a daily selection of fresh seafood and great steaks. The Shark Bar is more casual, offering lighter fare and Max classics in an up-tempo environment. • 110 Glastonbury Blvd., Glastonbury, 860-652-3474 *maxfishct.com*. Open daily. L D LS SB, $$, WA

Max's Oyster Bar • ***Seafood*** • **RC** Modern renditions of classic American seafood in an atmosphere reminiscent of a big-city oyster bar. • 964 Farmington Ave., West Hartford, 860-236-6299 *maxrestaurantgroup.com/oyster*. Open daily. L D LS SB, $$$, WA

Monte Alban • ***Mexican*** Low-key spot for Mexican staples like tacos, burritos and enchiladas, plus breakfast and outdoor tables. • 531 Farmington Ave., Hartford, 860-523-7243 *montealbanhartford.com*. Open daily. B (Sat-Sun) L D, $, WA

ON20 • ***Contemporary French / American*** • **EP RC** Savor panoramic city views and sophisticated atmosphere along with sumptuous seasonal cuisine. • 400 Columbus Blvd., 20th Floor, Hartford, 860-722-5161 *ontwenty.com*. Closed Sun. L (Mon-Fri) D (Thu-Sat), $$$, E

Park & Oak • ***American*** American cuisine with a Southern bent in a comfortable, family-friendly eatery. • 14 Oakwood Ave., West Hartford, 860-310-2099 *parkandoakrestaurant.com.* Open daily. L D SB, $$, WA

Pho 501 • ***Vietnamese*** • **EP** Dedicated to keeping it simple, with the best soups and authentic Vietnamese family recipes. • 501 Main St., East Hartford, 860-569-3700 *facebook.com/pho501.* Closed Mon. B L D, $

Ruth's Chris Steak House • ***Steak*** Famously known as "the steak that speaks for itself," the steaks served here are customer-aged USDA Prime. In addition, the restaurant utilizes locally sourced produce in its recipes. • 2513 Berlin Tpke., Newington, 860-666-2202 *ruthschris.com.* Open daily. L (Sun) D, $$$, WA

Sayulita • ***Mexican*** • **EP** Named for a Mexican fishing village, this restaurant has a party vibe and uses top-of-the-line ingredients. Specialties include a variety of tacos and Ceviche de Playa. • 865 Main St., Glastonbury, 860-430-9941 *cantinasayulita.com.* Open daily. L (Sat-Sun) D, $$, WA

Trumbull Kitchen • ***American*** "Global comfort food" is served at communal tables at this sophisticated city brasserie. • 150 Trumbull St., Hartford, 860-493-7417 *maxrestaurantgroup.com.* Open daily. L (Mon-Sat) D LS, $$, WA

Vinted Wine Bar & Kitchen • ***Tapas*** This exciting restaurant in Blue Back Square serves over 70 wines by the glass along with an ambitious small-plates menu. • 63 Memorial Road, West Hartford, 860-206-4648 *vintedwinebar.com.* Open daily. L D LS SB, $$, WA

Zohara • ***Mediterranean*** • **EP** Flavors of the Mediterranean, particularly Middle Eastern flavors, in an upscale setting alongside craft cocktails featuring Mediterranean-inspired spices, and wines from the region. • 991 Farmington Ave., West Hartford, 860-955-0300 *zoharact.com.* Open daily. L D LS SB, $$, WA

Litchfield County

Arethusa al Tavolo • ***New American*** • **EP** This high-flying, country restaurant serves a rotating seasonal menu of sparkling dishes using ingredients from their namesake dairy farm. • 828 Bantam Road, Bantam, 860-567-0043 *arethusaaltavolo.com.* Open Thurs.-Sun. L (Sat-Sun) D, $$$, WA

Carole Peck's Good News Cafe • ***New American*** Chef Carole Peck offers creative original dishes made from local and seasonal organic ingredients. • 694 Main St. S., Woodbury, 203-266-GOOD *good-news-cafe.com.* Closed Tues. L D, $$

The Cookhouse • ***Barbecue*** "Slo-smoked" baby-back ribs and pulled pork are the name of the game here. • 31 Danbury Road (Route 7), New Milford, 860-355-4111 *thecookhouse.com.* Open daily. L D, $$, WA

Hidden Valley Eatery • ***American*** • **EP** Locally sourced comfort food with a number of vegetarian options. Seasonal dinner menu changes nightly. • 88 Bee Brook Road, Washington Depot, 860-619-0660 *hiddenvalleyeatery.com.* Closed Tues. B L D (Fri-Sat), $$, WA

The Hopkins Inn • ***Austrian/American*** • **EP** A country inn with an Old World atmosphere known for wienerschnitzel, backhendl and escargot. • 22 Hopkins Road, Warren, 860-868-7295 *thehopkinsinn.com.* Closed Mon. B L (Tue-Sat) D, $$$, WA

John's Café • ***New American*** • **RC** Popular spot for New American cuisine with a Mediterranean accent: grilled pizzas, ricotta gnocchi and salmon with morels. • 693 Main St. S., Woodbury, 203-263-0188 *johnscafe.com.* Open daily. L (Mon-Sat) D, $$, WA

Litchfield Saltwater Grille • ***Seafood*** Casual and fine dining with seafood, raw bar, meat, vegetarian and kids menu options. Happy hour is Mon.-Fri 4-6 p.m., and the lounge is open late Fri. & Sat. Outdoor patio and private dining available. • 26 Commons Drive, Route 202, Litchfield, 860-567-4900 *litchfieldsaltwatergrille.org.* Open daily. L (Wed-Sun) D, $$$, E, WA

Mountainside Café • ***Farm to Table*** Modern rustic cafe offers up a fresh approach to American classics, such as the Country Burger and the Johnny Cash Skillet, in a warm and casual atmosphere. • 251 Route 7 South, Falls Village, 860-824-7876 *mountainside.com/cafe.* Open daily. B L SB, $, WA

The Old Oak Tavern • ***American*** Rustic tavern offering American comfort foods like homemade mozzarella sticks, corn and clam chowder, and Southern fried chicken in a rustic tavern environment. Local craft brews available on tap. • 1 South Kent Road, Gaylordsville, 860-355-1100 *theoldoaktavern.com.* Open daily. L (Fri-Sun) D SB, $$, E WA

The Restaurant at Winvian Farm • ***French*** • **EP** Chef Chris Eddy constantly changes the menu, using simple and seasonal ingredients accented with unusual and fresh findings. Smart casual attire and reservations required. • 155 Alain White Road, Morris, 860-567-9600 *winvian.com.* Closed Mon.-Tues. L (Sat-Sun) D, $$$, WA



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The White Hart • ***Farm to Table*** • **EP** High-quality cuisine made from an A-list of farm sources served in a rustic, recently remodeled historic country inn dating to 1805. • 15 Under Mountain Road, Salisbury, 860-435-0030 *whitehartinn.com*. Open daily. L (Mon, Wed, Fri) D, $$, WA

The White Horse Country Pub • ***American*** • **EP RC** Serves American pub favorites like burgers, ribs and seafood bake, along with some English ones — shepherd's pie, fish-and-chips and bangers and mash. Outdoor dining in warmer months provides a delightful experience. • 258 New Milford Tpke., Washington, 860-868-1496 *whitehorsecountrypub.com*. Open daily. L D SB, $$, WA

Winvian • ***American*** Simplicity and indulgence converge with fresh and spontaneous farm-to-table menus and an ecclectic wine selection. Reservations are required. • 155 Alain White Road, Morris, 860-567-9600 *winvian.com*. Closed Tues. L (Sat-Sun), D, $$$, WA

| Middlesex County |

Angelico's Lake House • ***American*** Overlooking Lake Pocotopaug, Angelico's features great outside dining and a tiki hut. • 81 North Main St., East Hampton, 860-267-1276 *angelicoslakehouse.com*. Closed Mon-Tues. D L (Sat) SB, $$, E, WA

Baci Grill • ***Modern Italian*** Try house specialties like cider glazed salmon, chicken sausage and broccoli rabe pasta, and Guinness marinated flank steak at this casual, trendy restaurant. Banquets only on Sunday. • 134 Berlin Road, Cromwell, 860-613-2224 *bacigrill.com*. Open daily. L D LS, $$, E, WA

Celtic Cavern • ***Gastropub*** Middletown's first-ever gastropub, featuring 18 beers on tap and a dynamic menu designed to tempt every palate. • 45 Melilli Plaza, Middletown, 860-894-2954 *celticcavern.com*. Open daily. L D LS, $$

Chester's Barbecue • ***Barbecue*** • **EP RC** Mouthwatering, slow-cooked barbecue is the name of the game here. Choose from BBQ favorites like smoked ribs, chicken, brisket and burnt ends. • 10 West Main St., Clinton, 860-669-6868 *chestersbbq.com*. Open daily. L D, $$

Chicago Sam's • ***American*** This beloved sports bar takes sports fanaticism to new heights, showing every NFL, MLB, NBA and NHL game. When it comes to the menu, this place is also a winner. • 51 Shunpike Road, Cromwell, 860-635-1860 *chicagosams.com*. Open daily. L D LS, $, E, WA

Chip's Pub III • ***Pub Grub*** This sports bar with a separate family-friendly dining area offers up 10-oz. burgers, as well as seafood and south-of-the-border fare. • 24 W. Main St., Clinton, 860-669-3463 *chipspub3.com*. Open daily. L D LS, $$, WA

[chow] • ***New American*** This rustic, family-friendly spot serves up favorites like BBQ meatballs, pulled pork and burnt end croute, plus craft pizza and drink options. • 36 Killingworth Tpke., Clinton, 860-669-6200 *chowfoodandbeverage.com*. Open daily. L (Tue-Sun) D SB, $$, WA

Christy's • ***American*** • **RC** All-day breakfast is the big draw here, particularly the wide selection of specialty pancakes, but lunch and dinner are served as well. • 1261 Boston Post Road, Westbrook, 860-399-4211 *facebook.com/CristysWestbrook*. Open daily. B L D, $, WA

Cuckoo's Nest • ***Mexican*** • **RC** Housed in a 200-year-old barn, Cuckoo's Nest has been serving nachos, fajitas, and Cajun shrimp and scallops for more than 40 years. • 1712 Post Road, Old Saybrook, 860-399-9060 *cuckoosnest.biz*. Open daily. L D SB, $$, E, WA

Dattilo Fine Italian at Water's Edge Resort and Spa • ***Italian*** Enjoy spectacular ocean views and Italian specialties like veal romano, wild mushroom arancini and lobster ravioli. And don't forget the award-winning Sunday brunch. • 1525 Boston Post Road., Westbrook, 860-399-5901 *watersedgeresortandspa.com*. Open daily. B L (Mon-Sat) D SB, $$$, E

Eli Cannon's Tap Room • ***Beer Bar*** • **EP** The Connecticut innovator of the modern beer bar, Eli Cannon's has been pouring sought-after brews since long before it was a trendy business model. Food favorites here include the famous nachos, chicken wings (there's 20 custom sauces), the classic cannon burger and the blackened chicken wrap. • 695 Main St., Middletown, 860-347-3547 *elicannons.com*. Closed Mon. L (Fri-Sun) D LS, $, WA



The Essex • ***New American*** • **EP** The adventurous, seasonal menu fuses familiar New England flavors with traditional Japanese home-style cooking. The dining room wraps around the open kitchen in a modern, minamilist layout. Prix fixe available. • 30 Main St., Centerbrook, 860-237-4189 *theessex.com*. Closed Mon. L D SB, $$, WA

The Griswold Inn • ***American*** The beloved 1776 "Gris" features classic New England cuisine in the dining room, small plates and 50 wines by the glass in the wine bar, and a lively taproom. • 36 Main St., Essex, 860-767-1776 *griswoldinn.com*. Open daily. L D SB, $$$, E, WA

Iguanas Ranas Taqueria • ***Mexican*** Affordable, fresh and authentic Mexican food served fresh and with home-style taste. • 484 Main St., Middletown, 860-346-8630 *iguanasranastaqueriact.com*. Closed Sun. L D, $, WA

It's Only Natural (ION) Restaurant • ***Vegetarian*** • **EP RC** Vegan/vegetarian offerings with a Southwestern bent, plus a full organic bar. • 606 Main St., Middletown, 860-346-9210 *ionrestaurant.com*. Closed Mon. L (Tue-Sat) D SB, $$, WA

La Boca Mexican Restaurant and Cantina • ***Mexican*** Sizzling fajitas, carne asada, grilled mahi mahi and the La Boca classic burrito are just some of the Mexican cuisine favorites offered at this fun restaurant with a patio and live music. • 337 Main St., Middletown, 860-347-4777 *labocamexican.com*. Open daily. L D, $$, E, WA

La Foresta • ***Italian*** This big and beautiful ristorante serves garden-fresh, ingredient-driven fine Northern Italian cuisine. It also has a VIP wine cellar and one of the state's best wine selections. • 163 Route 81, Killingworth, 860-663-1155 *laforestarestaurant.com*. Open daily. L (Mon-Fri) D, $$$, E, WA

Lenny & Joe's Fish Tale • ***Seafood*** • **RC** This Connecticut institution serves all manner of fresh seafood, from hot lobster rolls to baked stuffed shrimp to fried whole-belly clams. • 86 Boston Post Road, Westbrook, 860-669-0767 *ljfishtale.com*. Open daily. L D, $$, WA

Luce • ***American*** • **EP** Have your aged steaks grilled over wood chips—there are 20 types to choose from. Offers seafood, an extensive wine list and a great bar atmosphere. • 98 Washington St., Middletown, 860-344-0222 *lucect.com*. Open daily. L D LS, $$, WA

Luigi's • ***Italian*** Enjoy classic Italian favorites like seafood cannelloni, chicken leonardo, veal parmigiana, whole clams, steak teriyaki and other dishes. • 1295 Boston Post Road, Old Saybrook, 860-388-9190 *luigis-restaurant.com*. Closed Mon. L D, $$, WA

Mondo • ***Pizza*** This casual, family-owned restaurant specializes in brick-oven, New York-style thin crust pizza. There is also a beer and wine bar. • 10 Main St., Middletown, 860-343-3300 *mondomiddletown.com*. Open daily L D, $$, WA

Puerto Vallarta • ***Mexican*** • **RC** Authentic, traditional Mexican cuisine is prepared fresh daily – sometimes even at your table – mixing time-honored recipes with innovative culinary techniques. • 200 Main Metro Square, Middletown, 860-852-0080 *puertovallartausa.com*. Open daily. L D, $$, WA

Taste of China • ***Chinese*** • **EP** Authentic Szechuan/Chengdu-style food in an elegant yet casual setting, with a full bar and an extensive beer list. • 233 E. Main St., Clinton, 860-664-4454 *tasteofchinaus.com*. Open daily. L D, $, WA

Westbrook Lobster • ***Seafood*** • **RC** Offers the freshest fish possible in dishes ranging from baked stuffed lobster to teriyaki-grilled salmon to seafood paella. • 346 E. Main St., Clinton, 860-664-9464; 300 Church St., Wallingford, 203-265-5071 *westbrooklobster.com*. Open daily. L D, $$, WA

| New Haven County |

Adriana's • ***Italian*** Old-fashioned Italian fare, served up in generous portions. • 771 Grand Ave., New Haven, 203-865-6474 *adrianasnewhaven.com*. Open daily. L (Mon-Fri) D LS, $$, WA

Archie Moore's Bar & Restaurant • ***American*** • **RC** Casual pub-style dining with burgers, nachos and salads. And don't miss the award-winning buffalo chicken wings. • 188½ Willow St., New Haven, 203-773-9870; 39 N. Main St., Wallingford, 203-265-7100; 15 Factory Lane, Milford, 203-876-5088; 17 Elizabeth St., Derby, 203-732-3255 *archiemoores.com*. Open daily. L D LS, $

Atelier Florian • ***Seafood*** New American fine-dining restaurant with a Belgium flair, featuring a raw bar, fresh seafood and private dining space. • 1166 Chapel St., New Haven, 203-859-5999 *atelierflorian.net*. Open daily. L D SB, $$, WA

b Milford • ***Burgers*** Gourmet burgers and a wide selection of beers and bourbons, with unique local offerings at each location. • 1638 Boston Post Road, Milford, 203-713-8700 *burgersbeerbourbon.com*. Open daily. L D LS SB, $, WA

Baja's • ***Mexican*** • **EP** Casual, authentic Mexican food. • 63 Boston Post Road, Orange, 203-799-2252. Open daily. L D, $$, WA

Barcelona Restaurant & Wine Bar • ***Spanish Mediterranean*** • **EP RC** Hip restaurant serving Spanish and Mediterranean cuisine — including tapas, hot and cold. • 155 Temple St., New Haven, 203-848-3000 *barcelonawinebar.com.* Open daily. D LS SB, $$, WA

Bella'Gio • ***Italian*** • **RC** Classic and original recipies like lobster ravioli and chicken or veal bellagio are served up with the freshest ingredients and paired with a full variety of wine, beer and liquor. Patio dining available. • 835 W. Main St., Cheshire, 203-439-9175 *bellagioct.com.* Open daily. L (Mon-Sat) D, $$, WA

Bella's Café • ***American*** Stylish and cozy cafe serves breakfast and lunch all day during the week, or brunch on weekends. • 896 Whalley Ave., New Haven, 203-387-7107 *bellascafect.com.* Closed Mon. B L SB, $

Bin 100 • ***Mediterranean*** Feast on delicious Mediterranean cuisine elegantly served in a spacious dining room. • 100 Lansdale Ave., Milford, 203-882-1400 *bin100restaurant.com.* Open daily. D, $$$, E, WA

Cask Republic • ***American*** • **EP** Serious chef-crafted American fare as well as creative interpretations of globally inspired dishes with an inviting and fun vibe. • 179 Crown St., New Haven, 475-238-8335 *caskrepublic.com.* Open daily. L D SB, $$, WA

Cast Iron Chef Chop House & Oyster Bar • ***Steakhouse/Seafood*** Executive Chef Attilio Marini brings a modern interpretation to the old-world technique of skillet cooking, producing perfectly prepared steak, fresh seafood and lamb and duck entrees, as well as daily specials. • 660 State St., New Haven, 203-745-4669 *castironchefchophouse.com.* Open daily. D, $$$, WA

Ceviche • ***Latin Fusion*** Several styles of ceviche are offered here. In addition, the place features a variety of sizzling Latin dishes, cocktails and 30 types of tapas. Try the Granada Mojito, which features pomegranate flavors. • 530 Middlebury Road, Middlebury, 203-527-7634 *cevichelatinkitchen.com.* Closed Mon. L D, $$, WA

Chip's Family Restaurant • ***American*** Famous for its perfect pancakes, Chip's also has a creative lunch and dinner menu, and guests are welcome to BYOB. • 321 Boston Post Road, Orange, 203-795-5065; 775 Main St. S, Southbury, 203-586-1258 *chipsrestaurants.com.* Open daily. B L D, $, WA

Consiglio's Restaurant • ***Classic Italian*** Family-owned and -run for 80 years, Consiglio's is known for classic home-style favorites like homemade cavatelli and braciole, eggplant rollatini and lasagna. • 165 Wooster St., New Haven, 203-865-4489 *consiglios.com.* Open daily. L (Wed-Fri) D, $$, WA

Dew Drop Inn • ***Pub Grub*** • **EP RC** Casual pub and grill known for its burgers, wide selection of craft beers and Peanut Butter & Jelly Chicken Wings. • 5 North Ave, Derby, 203-735-7757 *facebook.com/Dewdropinnct.* Open daily. L D LS, $, WA

Dino's Seafood • ***Seafood*** This family-run favorite of local diners for more than five decades prides itself on serving high-quality seafood with the taste of love and joy in every order. Customer favorites include strip clams, fritters, lobster rolls, and top-split hot dogs accompanied with a local craft beer. • 540 Washington Ave., North Haven, 203-239-5548 *dinosseafood.com.* Closed Mon. L D, $, WA

Donahue's Madison Beach Grille • ***Irish Pub*** Casual shoreline dining serving up fresh seafood, homemade clam chowder and lobster bisque soups, premier salads and daily specials. Live music on the weekends. • 1320 Boston Post Road, Madison, 203-318-8362 *donahuesmadisonbeachgrille.com.* Closed Mon. L D, $$, E, WA

Elm City Social • ***American*** • **EP** Features creative and upscale pub-friendly fare in a visually impressive setting. There is also an assortment of excellent cocktails offered. • 286 College St., New Haven, 475-441-7436 *elmcitysocial.com.* Open daily. L (Mon-Fri) D LS SB, $$, WA

Frank Pepe Pizzeria Napoletana • ***Pizza*** • **EP RC** While world-famous white clam pizza is the standout, just about any pie here is worth the wait. • 157 Wooster St., New Haven, 203-865-5762; 130 Reidville Drive, Waterbury, 475-235-2145 *pepespizzeria.com.* Open daily. L (Mon.-Fri.) D, $, WA

G-Zen • ***Vegetarian*** • **EP RC** Focused on green business ethics, G-Zen offers up locally sourced vegetarian, vegan, organic and sustainable cuisine. Saturday brunch and takeout available. • 2 E. Main St., Branford, 203-208-0443 *g-zen.com.* Closed Sun-Mon. L (Sat) D, $$, E

Geronimo Tequila Bar & Southwest Grill • ***Southwestern Fusion*** • **EP** Mix of traditional Native American, Mexican, Spanish and Anglo-American fare, with bold flavors and authentic ingredients. • 271 Crown St., New Haven, 203-777-7700 *geronimobarandgrill.com.* Open daily. L D LS SB, $$, WA

Heirloom • ***Modern Continental*** Seasonal Farm & Coastal menu draws its inspiration from the New England pantry with fresh ingredients sourced from regional heritage growers and artisan suppliers. Expansive international wine collection. • The Study at Yale, 1157 Chapel St., New Haven, 203-503-3919 *heirloomnewhaven.com.* Open daily. B L (Mon-Fri) D LS SB, $$, WA

Home • ***American*** Whether in the main "dining room" or the "living room" lounge, Home offers up locally sourced food and a wide selection of regional craft brews to make its guests feel comfortable and comforted. • 1114 Main St., Branford, 203-483-5896 *homerestaurantct.com.* Closed Mon. L D LS, $$, E

House of Naan • ***Indian*** • **EP** Contemporary and savory Indian dishes, with Fusion craft cocktails enlivened by authentic fresh Indian spices and an enjoyable atmosphere. • 65 Howe St., New Haven, 203-562-6226 *houseofnaan.com.* Open daily. L D LS, $$, WA

L'Orcio • ***Contemporary Italian*** This upscale contemporary restaurant features an outdoor patio and a menu of house-made pastas, grilled whole fish and steaks with seasonal cuisine. • 806 State St., New Haven, 203-777-6670 *lorcio.com.* Closed Mon. D, $$

La Tavola Ristorante • ***Classic Italian*** • **EP** Enjoy a twist on classic Italian cuisine with prosciutto-wrapped figs, pepper bef carpaccio and pepper-encrusted Ahi tuna. • 702 Highland Ave., Waterbury, 203-755-2211 *latavolaristorante.com.* Open daily. L (Mon-Sat) D, $$$, WA

Lao Sze Chuan • ***Asian*** In Chinese, Lao means "old, authentic, traditional," and that's the restaurant's goal: to provide authentic Chinese cuisine at a reasonable price. • 1585 Boston Post Road, Milford, 203-783-0558 *tonygourmetgroup.com.* Open daily. L D, $, WA

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dining guide | new haven county

Lenny & Joe's Fish Tale • ***Seafood*** • **RC** This Connecticut institution serves all manner of fresh seafood, from hot lobster rolls to baked stuffed shrimp to fried whole-belly clams. • 501 Long Wharf Drive, New Haven, 203-691-6619; 1301 Boston Post Road, Madison, 203-245-7289 *ljfishtale.com.* Open daily. L D, $$, WA

Mamoun's • ***Middle Eastern*** • **RC** Authentic Middle Eastern cuisine, made from scratch using fresh, natural ingredients, fine imported spices and signature recipes, served in a traditional environment. • 85 Howe St., New Haven, 203-562-8444 *mamouns.com.* Open daily. L D LS, $, WA

Midnight Ramen • ***Asian*** • **RC** From 11 p.m. to 3 a.m. Fri. & Sat., Anya Sushi serves authentic Japanese Ramen, as well as varieties of sake, wine and Japanese beer. • 1150 Chapel St., New Haven, 203-891-6716 *midnightramen.com/.* Fri. & Sat. only LS, $, WA

Miya's • ***Sushi*** • **EP** Sushi restaurant like no other, thanks to chef Bun Lai's unique creations which combine flavor with eco-friendly sustainability. • 68 Howe St., New Haven, 203-777-9760 *miyassushi.com.* Closed Sun.-Mon. D LS, $$, WA

Olea • ***Spanish*** • **EP RC** World-class, full-service Spanish restaurant, with a fun tapas bar. • 39 High St., New Haven, 203-780-8925 *oleanewhaven.com.* Closed Sun. D, $$$, WA

Park Central Tavern • ***American*** The dynamic weekly menu showcases signature entrées and classic favorites made with fresh New England ingredients. • 1640 Whitney Ave., Hamden, 203-287-8887 *parkcentraltavern.com.* Closed Mon. L (Wed-Sun) D SB, $$, WA

The Place • ***Seafood*** • **EP RC** Outdoor restaurant where seafood is cooked over an 18-foot fire pit. Open seasonally May-Sept. and weekends in Oct. • 901 Boston Post Road, Guilford, 203-453-9276 *theplaceguilford.com.* Open daily. L (Sat-Sun) D, $, WA

Ristorante Luce • ***Classic Italian*** Enjoy the double-cut veal chops, pane cotto, risotto pescatore and daily fish specials. Extensive wine list. • 2987 Whitney Ave., Hamden, 203-407-8000 *ristoranteluce.net.* Open daily. L (Mon-Fri) D, $$, WA

Señor Pancho's • ***Mexican*** Festive spot serving up terrific fresh salsa and margaritas to go with mole poblano, carne asada and fajitas. • 280 Cheshire Road, Prospect, 203-758-7788; 385 Main St. S., Southbury, 203-262-6988 *senorpanchos.com.* Open daily. L D, $, E, WA

Shell & Bones Oyster Bar & Grill • ***Seafood*** • **EP RC** This waterside restaurant features the celebrated creations of executive chef Arturo Franco-Camacho whose specialties include steak and seafood. • 100 South Water St., New Haven, 203-787-3466 *shellandbones.com.* Open daily. D L (Sat.-Sun.), $$$, WA

Spiga • ***Italian*** • **RC** Pair a small plate, entrée or brick-oven pizza with one of more than 30 wines on hand. • 136 Main St., New Canaan, 203-920-1351 *eatatspiga.com.* Open daily. L D LS SB, $$, WA

Taste of China • ***Chinese*** • **EP** Authentic Szechuan/Chengdu-style food in an elegant yet casual setting, with a full bar and an extensive beer list. • 954 Chapel St., New Haven, 203-745-5872 *tasteofchinaus.com.* Open daily. L D LS, $, WA

The Wharf • ***New American*** • **EP** This spot at the Madison Beach Hotel serves up award-winning, farm-to-table New England cuisine with a contemporary flair and a side of water views. • 94 West Wharf Road, Madison, 203-350-0014 *madisonbeachhotel.com.* Open daily. B L D, $$$, WA

Zafra Cuban Restaurant & Rum Bar • ***Cuban*** With a collection of 300 different kinds of rum — one of the largest in the country — this New Haven establishment is Connecticut's first true rum bar. Small, dark and atmospheric, this hip locale presents a subtle and sometimes fanciful take on Cuban soul food. • 259 Orange St., New Haven, 203-859-5342 *zafrarumbar.com.* Closed Sun & Mon L (Wed-Fri) D LS, $$, WA

Zinc • ***American*** • **EP** Their modern interpretation of "American Food" is local market-inspired and globally infused with a focus on sustainable food, offering a dining experience fit for even the most enthusiastic of foodies. • 964 Chapel St., New Haven, 203-624-0507 *zincfood.com.* Closed Sun. L (Tue-Fri) D, $$$, WA

Vyne Restaurant and Bar • Combines Connecticut country with NYC style, serving specialties like cowboy ribeye, seared sea scallops or trumpet pasta with shrimp either in the elegant dining room on on the outdoor patio with a scenic view of the landscaped waterfalls. • 1365 Whittemore Road, Middlebury, 203-518-4000 *vynerestaurant.com.* Closed Mon. L D, $$$, WA

New London County

Bleu Squid • ***American*** A bakery and cheese shop serving 30 cheeses and dozens of different cupcakes. Also serves up breakfast as well as grilled cheese sandwiches to go, freshly made and to order, including the best-selling lobster grilled cheese. • 27 Coogan Blvd., Mystic, 860-536-6343 *dessertsmysticct.com.* Open daily. B L, $, WA

Breakwater • ***Seafood*** Stunning views and ocean-to-table dishes including some with Asian or Latin-American touches. • 66 Water St., Stonington, 860-415-8123 *breakwaterstonington.com.* Closed Mon.-Tues. L D, $$, WA

The Captain Daniel Packer Inne • ***American*** This 1754 whaler's inn features a view of the Mystic River along with dishes like lemon pepper chicken, filet mignon and Faroe Island salmon. • 32 Water St., Mystic, 860-536-3555 *danielpacker.com.* Open daily. L D, $$$, E, WA

Flanders Fish Market & Restaurant • ***Seafood*** • **RC** Flanders excels at lobster bisque, fish-and-chips and broiled seafood. Known for its Sunday brunch, fresh seafood market and New England clambakes. • 22 Chesterfield Road, East Lyme, 860-739-8866 *flandersfish.com.* Open daily. L D SB, $$, WA

Kensington's at Norwich Inn • ***American*** A first-class restaurant serving gourmet food with an emphasis on natural meats, fresh, locally sourced produce and healthy preparations. • 607 West Thames St., Norwich, 860-425-3630 *thespaatnorwichinn.com/kensingtons.* Open daily. B L D SB, $$$, E, WA

The Old Lyme Inn • ***American*** The Inn's restaurant and bar features a locally sourced menu with a modern twist on traditional dishes. Enjoy blues music from the patio on weekends and live jazz music during Sunday brunch. • 85 Lyme St., Old Lyme, 860-434-2600 *oldlymeinn.com.* Closed Sun-Mon. L D SB, $$$, E, WA

Oyster Club • ***American*** • **EP** This popular place showcases food that travels the shortest distance from farm and sea to table, with seasonality and location determining the day's dishes. • 13 Water St., Mystic, 860-415-9266 *oysterclubct.com.* Open daily. L (Fri-Sat) D SB, $$$, WA



Rebeka Fresh Pasta Restaurant • *Italian* • RC Authentic Italian pasta dishes, made fresh daily. • 135 Boston Post Road, East Lyme, 860-691-1155 *rebekasfreshpastarestaurant.com.* Open daily. D, $$, WA

Kensington's • *American* Located in the Spa at Norwich Inn, this spot puts a unique twist on comfort food of various cuisines for everyone from meat lovers to vegetarians. Outdoor dining is available; reservations required for Sunday brunch. • 607 W. Thames St., Norwich, 860-886-2401 *thespaatnorwichinn.com/kensingtons.* Open daily. B L D SB, $$$, WA

Tolland County

Bidwell Tavern & Cafe • *American* This 1822 Coventry tavern, once the town hall, offers prime rib, chicken wings and 24 beers on tap. • 1260 Main St. (Route 31), Coventry, 860-742-6978 *thebidwelltavern.com.* Open daily. L D LS, $$, E, WA

The Blue Oak at the Nathan Hale Inn • *American* On the UConn campus, enjoy honest New England-style dishes and lighter fare. • 855 Bolton Road, Storrs, 860-427-7888 *nathanhaleinn.com.* Open daily. B L D, $$, WA

Lake View • *Seafood / Italian* Fresh seafood, Italian dishes, paninis, salads, burgers and wings are served in a casual, romantic waterside setting. • 50 Lake St., Coventry, 860-498-0500 *coventrylakeview.com.* Open daily. L D LS, $$, E, WA

Rein's New York Style Deli-Restaurant • *American* • EP RC Bright and bustling Jewish deli serving everything from challah French toast and potato pancakes to pastrami reubens and cheese blintzes. • 435 Hartford Tpke., Vernon, 860-875-1344 *reinsdeli.com.* Open daily. B L D LS, $, WA

True Blue Tavern at the Nathan Hale Inn • *American* Great casual dining in a fun atmosphere celebrating the spirit of UConn athletics. • 855 Bolton Road, Storrs, 860-427-7888 *nathanhaleinn.com.* Open daily. L D, $$, WA

Utsav Indian Cuisine • *Indian* • EP This gem boasts a menu of delectable Indian treats such as shamm savera or calamari cochin. • 575 Talcottville Road, Vernon, 860-871-8714 *utsavct.com.* Open daily. L D, $$, WA

Windham County

85 Main • *New American* There's something for everyone at this Main Street fixture: from fresh sushi to maple-glazed pan seared scallops, gourmet burgers to wild-mushroom ravioli. • 85 Main St., Putnam, 860-928-1660 *85main.com.* Open daily. L D LS, $$, WA

The Courthouse Bar & Grille • *American* • EP Serves lots of great appetizers, plus "arresting" main courses such as seafood casserole and Montreal sirloin. • 121 Main St., Putnam, 860-963-0074 *courthousebarandgrille.com.* Open daily. L D LS, $$, WA

The Flatbread Company, Canton • *Pizza* • EP Wood-fired, clay oven pizza made from organic and all-natural ingredients. • 110 Albany Turnpike #914, Canton, 860-693-3314 *flatbreadcompany.com/canton/.* Open daily. L D, $, WA

Hank's Restaurant • *American* A family place serving home-style favorites like baked stuffed shrimp, lobster salad rolls and prime rib. • 416 Providence Road, Brooklyn, 860-774-6071 *hanksrestaurant.com.* Open daily. L D, $$, WA

The Heirloom Food Company • *Vegan* • EP Organic cafe & juice bar offering locally sourced, organic ingredients. • 630 N. Main St., Danielson, 860-779–3373 *eatheirloomfood.com.* Closed Sun.-Mon. B L, $, WA

The Inn at Woodstock Hill • *American* The menu at this historic estate includes shrimp-and-sea-scallop stir-fry and duckling à l'orange. Hours vary by season. • 94 Plaine Hill Road, Woodstock, 860-928-0528 *woodstockhill.com.* Closed Mon. D SB, $$$, WA

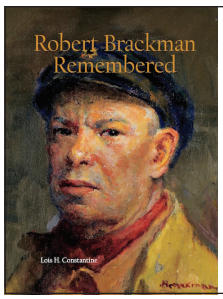
The Mansion at Bald Hill • *American* Entrees include pistachio salmon and New Zealand rack of lamb, and don't skip the lobster mac 'n' cheese. • 29 Plaine Road, South Woodstock, 860-974-3456 *mansionatbaldhill.com.* Closed Mon. D SB, $$$, WA

Sugar & Smoke Brazen BBQ • *Barbecue* This no-frills North Carolina-style BBQ joint uses an old-school smoker and hickory wood • 74B School St., Putnam, 860-928-7842. Closed Sun. & Mon. L, $

Willimantic Brewing Co. / Main Street Café • *Brew Pub* This pioneering brewery is located within a historic U.S. Post Office building. Beers are brewed in full view of diners. Try the ale-steamed mussels. Other Connecticut craft beers available. • 967 Main St., Willimantic, 860-423-6777 *willibrew.com.* Open daily. L (Tue-Sun) D LS, $$, WA



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DEADLINES: Materials should be received by the 25th of the second month preceding the issue (for example, September 25 for November).

ADDRESS CORRESPONDENCE:

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Fall brings shorter days, chillier weather, and the end of summer vacation. But it also brings fantastic new programming, courtesy of Connecticut Public, home to Connecticut Public Television and Connecticut Public Radio!

This month, we're looking back at the last year since Hurricane Maria with a new documentary premiering Sunday, September 20 at 8 p.m. *The Island Next Door: Puerto Rico and Connecticut After Hurricane Maria* recaps Connecticut Public Radio's reporting about ongoing recovery efforts in Puerto Rico and the island's greater connection to the state of Connecticut. For more on *The Island Next Door*, visit **theislandnextdoor.wnpr.org**

Throughout the month of September, you can also catch all new episodes of *The Great American Read*. Explore the most iconic heroes, scariest monsters, and most romantic moments in all of American literature before finding out what America chose as its most-loved novel. For more on *The Great American Read*, visit **cptv.org/greatread**. You can also follow along on social media with the hashtag **#GreatReadPBS**.

Be sure to tune in Tuesday, September 25 at 9 p.m. for the premiere of *The Mayo Clinic: Faith – Hope – Science*. Produced by award-winning documentarian Ken Burns, this film features interviews with John McCain, the Dalai Lama, and other patients while telling the story of William Worrall Mayo, the clinic's founder.

We're also excited about the return of two beloved *Masterpiece* series this month: *Poldark* and *The Durrells in Corfu*! And now, you can binge both seasons in their entirety on CPTV Passport the night of their broadcast premiere — Sunday, September 30. For more information about CPTV Passport, visit **cptv.org/passport**.

So stay tuned for a fall full of terrific entertainment, and as always, thank you for providing the support that makes it possible!

PRESIDENT AND CEO, CONNECTICUT PUBLIC

Connecticut public
Media for the curious.

"What's On!"
is published monthly as a supplement in Connecticut Magazine by Connecticut Public, 1049 Asylum Avenue, Hartford, CT 06105. Connecticut Magazine, 100 Gando Drive, New Haven, CT 06513, is published monthly by Digital First Media, Lower Makefield Corporate Center; 790 Township Line Road, 3rd Floor, Yardley, PA 19067. Editorial content for "What's On!", the 16-page program guide devoted to CPTV and WNPR, is determined by Connecticut Public, a nonprofit corporation chartered by the state of Connecticut.

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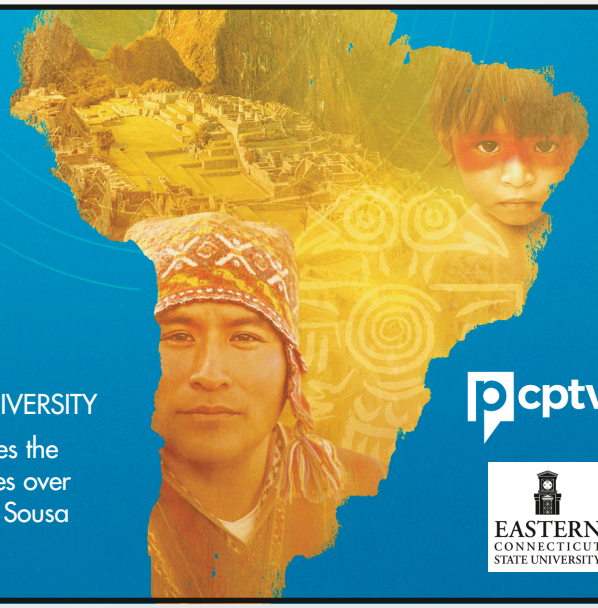
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NATIVE AMERICA

PREVIEW SCREENING AND Q&A
FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26 AT 7 P.M.
STUDENT CENTER THEATER • EASTERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY
Combining modern science with Native knowledge, this series explores the splendor and ingenuity of the world created by America's First Peoples over 15,000 years ago. Series producer Gary Glassman and director Joe Sousa will attend.



cptv
EASTERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY

TRANS-SIBERIAN ORCHESTRA:
The Ghosts of Christmas Eve

TUNE IN FOR EXCLUSIVE TICKET OPPORTUNITIES FOR TSO'S CHRISTMAS CONCERT IN CONNECTICUT!

Thursday, September 6 at 8 p.m.
Saturday, September 8 at 9 p.m.
Sunday, September 9 at 7:30 p.m. on CPTV

In this holiday classic narrated by the late Ossie Davis, a runaway girl returns to her family after she enters a rundown theater for shelter and encounters an old caretaker (Davis), who guides her on her journey. The caretaker brings the theater to life through various musical performances by singers Jewel, Michael Crawford, and the Trans-Siberian Orchestra.

The Great American Read

Tuesdays at 8 p.m. beginning September 11 on CPTV

Examine the power, passion, and joy of reading, gauged through the lens of America's 100 best-loved novels chosen by the public. The multi-part series features reflections from celebrities and everyday Americans, culminating in the reveal of "America's Best-Loved Novel."





Anne of Green Gables: FIRE & DEW

Sunday, September 23 at 7:30 p.m. on CPTV

Anne moves to Charlottetown and is overwhelmed by her new surroundings, difficult classes at teacher's college, and a deepening romance with Gilbert. At the same time, Matthew and Marilla deal with health and financial difficulties that jeopardize their lives at Green Gables.

The Mayo Clinic: FAITH – HOPE – SCIENCE

Tuesday, September 25 at 9 p.m. on CPTV

Take a timely look at how one institution has met the changing demands of healthcare for 150 years. Executive produced by documentarian Ken Burns, discover what the Mayo Clinic can teach us about the challenges of patient care today.





The Miniaturist ON MASTERPIECE

Sundays at 9 p.m. beginning September 9 on CPTV

A teen bride's new husband presents her with an extraordinary wedding gift: a cabinet that is a miniature replica of their home. Furnished by an elusive Miniaturist, the tiny creations seem to predict and unravel the future with unsettling precision.

The Island Next Door

PUERTO RICO AND CONNECTICUT AFTER HURRICANE MARIA

One year ago this month, Hurricane Maria made landfall in Puerto Rico. Through *The Island Next Door*, an ongoing, multi-platform reporting initiative, Connecticut Public Radio has remained committed to telling the stories of real people touched by the storm, both on and off the island.

We sat down with Connecticut Public Radio's News Director Jeff Cohen and Visual and Radio Reporter Ryan Caron King to discuss their most recent trip to Puerto Rico, what they've learned over the past year, and why the story of Hurricane Maria is a local one.

▼ Attendees find respite amid recovery efforts at free concerts at La Casa Histórica de la Música Cayeyana. Photo by Ryan Caron King



Q You've just returned from your third trip to the island since the storm hit almost one year ago. Can you give us an update about current recovery efforts?

Jeff Cohen: Most people have power, though some still don't; those that do say they often lose it, or it's irregular at best. The things we saw on our first trip — downed power lines and poles, mudslides, the stuff of hurricane disasters — have largely been cleaned up.

Perhaps harder to see but just as important is the emotional trauma that those on the island are still dealing with. Minor rainstorms can become major emotional events, as residents say they fear losing what they have spent the past year trying to recover.

▶ NEAR RIGHT Alejandro La Luz Rivera insisted on returning to Puerto Rico last year after the hurricane because he didn't want to leave the home he and his wife built together. Photo by Ryan Caron King
FAR RIGHT Children play in a schoolyard in the mountain town of Orocovis, Puerto Rico. Photo by Ryan Caron King



Only on cptv

The Island Next Door: Puerto Rico and Connecticut After Hurricane Maria **premieres THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 20 at 8 p.m. on CPTV.**

▲ Hurricane evacuees in Hartford led the way during the city's Puerto Rican Day Parade in June 2018. Photo by Frankie Graziano

Q Over a year of reporting, which story/stories have impacted you the most?

JC: Each story is unique, many are deeply personal, and all of them are snapshots in time of a place and its people. What we often found most gripping were the stories of people who were figuring out their own personal paths of recovery. These aren't simply stories about Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans; they're stories about people.



Ryan Caron King: We spent time earlier this year telling the stories of hurricane evacuees trying to make it work in Connecticut after losing their homes on the island. Many were living in uncertainty for months, having a hard time finding a permanent place to live — and not knowing when their FEMA assistance would run out. A powerful moment came in June at the Puerto Rican Day Parade in Hartford. A group of hurricane evacuees lead the parade carrying a giant Puerto Rican flag as they celebrated their island after months of hardship that came with making a new life in an unfamiliar place.

Q Why is the story of recovery efforts in Puerto Rico important as it relates to the state of Connecticut?

JC: Connecticut had hundreds of thousands of residents with Puerto Rican roots before the hurricane. Thousands more came after Maria hit. For us to treat the storm and its aftermath as anything other than a local story would be to fail in our work and our public service mission.

To learn more about *The Island Next Door*, including ongoing coverage of the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, visit **theislandnextdoor.wnpr.org**.



Prime Time | September 1-6

- CPTV Original, CPTV National Production or Presentation, or CPTV Co-production indicated in blue font.
- Program or episode premiere indicated by a (P). Live broadcasts indicated by a (L).
- Asterisk indicates that show begins prior to 8 p.m.; two asterisks indicate that show ends after 12 a.m. Visit CPTV.org/schedule for exact start and end times.
- This schedule is accurate as of press time; visit CPTV.org/schedule for the most up-to-date program schedule.

SAT | 1	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00	11:30
cptv	**Rocktopia Live in Budapest: A Classical (R)evolution** Classical music is fused with rock in a performance filmed at the Hungarian State Opera House in Budapest.			**Get Down Tonight: The Disco Explosion (My Music)** KC and the Sunshine Band host a historic reunion with the superstars of the '70s disco and dance era. New live performances as well as classic clips are featured.				**10-Day Belly Slimdown with Dr. Kellyann****
spirit	**Betty White: First Lady of Television** See a celebration of one of America's most beloved entertainers.			**Death in Paradise, Season 7 - The Stakes Are High**		**The Tunnel, Season 3: Vengeance - Part 3** (P)		**Breaking Big - Trevor Noah**

SUN | 2	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00	11:30
cptv	**Ed Sullivan's Rock & Roll Classics: The '60s (My Music)*** (Start: 7 p.m.)		**Memory Rescue with Daniel Amen, M.D.** Dr. Daniel Amen demonstrates ways to supercharge your memory and remember what matters most to you.				**The Beatles: Eight Days a Week - The Touring Years**** This Ron Howard film follows the Fab Four.	
spirit	**Nature - Giraffes: Africa's Gentle Giants** A group of people attempt to relocate a herd of wild giraffes.			**Blue Planet - Part 5: Seasonal Seas**		**Nature's Microworlds** (P)	**Natural Curiosities** (P)	**Weekend Explorer**

MON | 3	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00	11:30
cptv	**Magic Moments: The Best of '50s Pop** Classic tunes and memorable artists such as Patti Page, the Four Aces, and Frankie Lane are showcased.				**Forever Painless with Miranda Esmonde-White** A groundbreaking and eye-opening education on chronic pain and its causes is presented.			**The Age Fix with Anthony Youn, M.D.****
spirit	**Rick Steves' Special: The Holy Land, Israelis & Palestinians Today** Rick Steves explores Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, a home in Bethlehem, and more.				**Secrets of the Dead - Scanning the Pyramids**		**Richard Bangs' Adventures with Purpose - Egypt: Quest for...**	

TUE | 4	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00	11:30
cptv	**BrainFit: 50 Ways to Grow Your Brain with Daniel Amen, M.D., and Tana Amen, R.N.** Dr. Daniel Amen and Tana Amen share their best secrets for igniting your energy and focus at any age.				**10-Day Belly Slimdown with Dr. Kellyann** With over 20 years of experience as a naturopathic physician and nutrition consultant, Dr. Kellyann shares her powerful, proven plan for blasting belly fat quickly and safely.			
spirit	**Legends of Airpower** (P)	**Legends of Airpower** (P)	**NOVA - Making North America: Origins**		**NOVA - Making North America: Life**		**NOVA - Making North America: Human**	

WED | 5	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00	11:30
cptv	**The Highway Men: Live at Nassau Coliseum**			**Rocktopia Live in Budapest: A Classical (R)evolution** (See CPTV, Sept. 1 at 8 p.m.)			**Rick Steves' Heart of Italy**** Rick Steves explores Umbria, Assisi, Siena, and the Cinque Terre.	
spirit	**Rocktopia Live in Budapest: A Classical (R)evolution** (See CPTV, Sept. 1 at 8 p.m.)			**The Beatles: Eight Days a Week - The Touring Years** (See CPTV, Sept. 2 at 11 p.m.)				

THU | 6	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00	11:30
cptv	**Trans-Siberian Orchestra: Ghosts of Christmas Past** A runaway hides in an abandoned theater that comes to life with music. Ossie Davis and Jewel star.			**'70s Soul Superstars (My Music)** Join Patti LaBelle for an all-star reunion of the legends of '70s Motown, R&B, and soul, including the Commodores, original lead Eugene Record reuniting with the Chi-Lites, the Stylistics, Yvonne Elliman, Heatwave, the Trammps, and the Emotions.				
spirit	**Ric Edelman's The Truth About Your Future** (P) Edelman offers a map for viewers to achieve their goals.			**This Old House Hour** Preventative tree work and tiling are featured.		**This Old House Hour** Liz and Norm lay composite decking.		**Start Up**



ROCKTOPIA: A Classical Revolution LIVE IN BUDAPEST

Saturday, September 1 at 8 p.m. and Wednesday, September 5 at 9:30 p.m. on CPTV

EXCLUSIVE TICKETS & MEET AND GREET OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE

This enthralling live concert celebrates a fusion of classical music, classic rock, and opera. Original arrangements draw from the most popular classic rock songs and the finest composers, including Elton John, Mozart, Journey, Strauss, and more.

Prime Time | September 7-12

FRI 7	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00	11:30
cptv	**Memory Rescue with Daniel Amen, M.D.** (See CPTV, Sept. 2 at 9 p.m.)				**Suze Orman's Financial Solutions for You** Suze Orman knows that everyone has financial issues and problems. In this special, she focuses on helping individuals find financial solutions that fit their situation.			
spirit	**The Public Television Feature Film Collection - Key Largo** (P) A gangster holds a GI and others hostage in a hotel. Humphrey Bogart stars.				**The Public Television Feature Film Collection - Dial M for Murder** (P) A husband's plot to murder his unfaithful wife goes awry. Grace Kelly stars.			
SAT 8	**8:00**	**8:30**	**9:00**	**9:30**	**10:00**	**10:30**	**11:00**	**11:30**
cptv	**Viewers' Favorites** See a selection of some of CPTV's most popular specials.		**Trans-Siberian Orchestra: Ghosts of Christmas Past** (See CPTV, Sept. 6 at 8 p.m.)			**Viewers' Favorites** (See CPTV, Sept. 8 at 8 p.m.)		
spirit	**A Place to Call Home, Season 4 - You're Just in Love**		**A Place to Call Home, Season 4 - There'll Be Some Changes**		**The Tunnel, Season 3: Vengeance - Part 4** (P)		**Arthur and George on Masterpiece - Part 1**	
SUN 9	**8:00**	**8:30**	**9:00**	**9:30**	**10:00**	**10:30**	**11:00**	**11:30**
cptv	**Trans-Siberian Orchestra: Ghosts of Christmas Past** * (Start: 7:30 p.m.; See CPTV, Sept. 6 at 8 p.m.)		**The Miniaturist on Masterpiece - Part 1** (P) Nella marries to rescue her family from financial ruin.		**Sherlock, Season 4 on Masterpiece - The Final Problem** Secrets are revealed as Sherlock and Watson face their greatest challenge ever.			**Breaking Big - Michael Strahan** (P)
spirit	**Nature - Animal Childhood** Follow the challenges facing young animals.		**Blue Planet - Part 6: Coral Seas**		**Nature's Microworlds** (P)	**Natural Curiosities** (P)	**NOVA - Making North America: Origins**	
MON 10	**8:00**	**8:30**	**9:00**	**9:30**	**10:00**	**10:30**	**11:00**	**11:30**
cptv	**Antiques Roadshow - Bismarck, Part 2** A Chinese Imperial ceremonial outfit is featured.		**Antiques Roadshow - Vintage Salt Lake City** Highlights include Napoleonic prisoner-of-war pieces.		**Finding Your Roots, Season 3 - The Pioneers** Guests include Neil Patrick Harris and Gloria Steinem.		**Secrets of the Dead - Jamestown's Dark Winter** The early American colony is excavated.	
spirit	**Weekends with Yankee**	**Outside with Greg Aiello**	**Canadian Rockies by Rail** Stunning scenery is featured.		**Latino Americans - Part 1: Foreigners in Their Own Land**		**Amanpour & Company** (P) (See *Highlight* below.)	
TUE 11	**8:00**	**8:30**	**9:00**	**9:30**	**10:00**	**10:30**	**11:00**	**11:30**
cptv	**The Great American Read - Fall Kick-Off** (P) Follow the search for America's best-loved novel!		**Margaret Mitchell: American Masters** Light is shed on the life of the *Gone With the Wind* author.		**Frontline - Left Behind America** (P) Follow a city's struggle to recover in the post-recession economy.		**Independent Lens - The Untold Tales of Armistead Maupin**** The *Tales of the City* creator is profiled.	
spirit	**We'll Meet Again - Heroes of 9/11** People who met on 9/11 are reunited.		**9/11 Inside the Pentagon** The attack on the Pentagon is explored.		**Super Skyscrapers - One World Trade Center**		**Amanpour & Company** (P) (See *Highlight* below.)	
WED 12	**8:00**	**8:30**	**9:00**	**9:30**	**10:00**	**10:30**	**11:00**	**11:30**
cptv	**Ancient Invisible Cities - Cairo** (P) Explore Egypt's ancient treasures, including the Great Pyramid of Giza.		**Ancient Invisible Cities - Istanbul** (P) The often-invisible treasures of Istanbul are examined.		**NOVA - Iceman Reborn** Otzi the Iceman is the oldest known natural mummy.		**Antiques Roadshow - Bismarck, Part 2** (See CPTV, Sept. 10 at 8 p.m.)	
spirit	**The Roosevelts: An Intimate History - Part 6: The Common Cause** FDR breaks the third-term tradition and tries to prepare the U.S. to enter WWII.				**POV - The Apology** (P) Women were forced into sexual slavery by the Imperial Japanese Army during WWII.			**Amanpour & Company**** (P)

Amanpour & Company

Weeknights at 11 p.m. beginning Monday, September 10 on CPTV Spirit

Join legendary journalist Christiane Amanpour for wide-ranging, in-depth conversations with global thought leaders and cultural influencers on the issues and trends impacting the world each day. Contributors include Walter Isaacson, Michel Martin, Alicia Menendez, and Hari Sreenivasan.



Prime Time | September 13-18

THU 13	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00	11:30
cptv	Father Brown, Season 6 - The Cat of Mastigatus (P) A girl is found left for dead at a boys' school fete.		800 Words, Season 2 - Part 4 George's house is full of teenagers.		Hinterland, Season 1 - Penwyllt, Part 2 The investigation continues into a young man's death.		This Old House	This Old House
spirit	This Old House Hour A fireback is installed on a kitchen wall.		This Old House Hour Liz's childhood home has been transformed.		This Old House	This Old House	Amanpour & Company (P) (See page 99.)	
FRI 14	**8:00**	**8:30**	**9:00**	**9:30**	**10:00**	**10:30**	**11:00**	**11:30**
cptv	Midsomer Murders - Blood on the Saddle, Part 1 (P) A murderer kills villagers in a Wild West fashion.		Death in Paradise, Season 7 - Meditated in Murder (P) A leader of a spiritual retreat is killed.		Basquiat: American Masters (P) Discover the anonymous graffiti artist turned rock star of the early '80s art scene in New York.			Sharing Connecticut - Amplify
spirit	Variety Studio: Actors on Actors - Benedict Cumberbatch and... (P)		The Public Television Feature Film Collection - Body Heat (P) A socialite gets a lawyer to plot her husband's murder. Kathleen Turner stars.				Amanpour & Company (P) (See page 99.)	
SAT 15	**8:00**	**8:30**	**9:00**	**9:30**	**10:00**	**10:30**	**11:00**	**11:30**
cptv	The Public Television Feature Film Collection - To Have and Not Have (P) A boat skipper flirts with a singer and fools Nazis. Humphrey Bogart stars.		The Public Television Feature Film Collection - Key Largo (Start: 9:45 p.m.; See CPTV Spirit, Sept. 7 at 8 p.m.)					Hollywood Idols - Alan Ladd
spirit	A Place to Call Home, Season 4 - Where Will the Baby's Dimple Be?		Death in Paradise, Season 7 - Meditated in Murder		The Tunnel, Season 3: Vengeance - Part 5 (P)		Arthur and George on Masterpiece - Part 2	
SUN 16	**8:00**	**8:30**	**9:00**	**9:30**	**10:00**	**10:30**	**11:00**	**11:30**
cptv	Secrets of Highclere Castle Explore one of England's most spectacular country houses.		The Miniaturist on Masterpiece - Part 2 (P) Johannes makes a confession to Nella; Otto disappears.		My Mother and Other Strangers, Season 1 on Masterpiece - Part 1 Learn how Rose met Capt. Dreyfuss.		My Mother and Other Strangers, Season 1 on Masterpiece - Part 2 Francis goes poaching.	
spirit	Nature - Charlie and the Curious Otters		Blue Planet - Part 7: Tidal Seas		Nature's Microworlds (P)	Natural Curiosities (P)	NOVA - Making North America: Life	
MON 17	**8:00**	**8:30**	**9:00**	**9:30**	**10:00**	**10:30**	**11:00**	**11:30**
cptv	Antiques Roadshow - Celebrating Latino Heritage (P) See items connected to Latin American culture.		Antiques Roadshow - Birmingham, Part 1 Highlights include Andy Warhol lithographs.		Finding Your Roots, Season 3 - The Long Way Home Guests include actress Julianna Margulies.		Ancient Invisible Cities - Istanbul (See CPTV, Sept. 12 at 9 p.m.)	
spirit	Weekends with Yankee	Peregrine Dame (P)	New Orleans: The First 300 Years (P) The city's history is chronicled.		Latino Americans - Part 2: Empire of Dreams		Amanpour & Company (P) (See page 99.)	
TUE 18	**8:00**	**8:30**	**9:00**	**9:30**	**10:00**	**10:30**	**11:00**	**11:30**
cptv	The Great American Read - Who Am I? (P) How do beloved novels address the question, "Who am I?"		Harper Lee: American Masters Explore the phenomenon behind *To Kill a Mockingbird* and the mysterious life of its author.			Frontline - Blackout in Puerto Rico The crisis in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria is investigated.		Breaking Big - Gretchen Carlson (P)
spirit	Legends of Airpower (P)	Legends of Airpower (P)	NOVA - Secrets of the Shining Knight		Secrets of the Dead - Resurrecting Richard III		Amanpour & Company (P) (See page 99.)	

The Nature Conservancy
CONNECTICUT
NATURE TALKS
KEEPING THE PROMISE
Connecticut Public Radio
Yale SCHOOL OF FORESTRY & ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

Moderated by JOHN DANKOSKY:
EXECUTIVE EDITOR, NEW ENGLAND NEWS COLLABORATIVE
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 28
10 a.m. – 12 p.m.
Kroon Hall, Yale University, 195 Prospect Street, New Haven, CT
We're bringing together some of the world's top experts to discuss our changing climate — what is happening and what needs to happen in order to transform our world, from one reliant on fossil fuels, to one based on clean, renewable energy sources.
Tickets are $35 Register at **naturetalksct.org**

Prime Time | September 19-24

WED|19	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00	11:30
cptv	**The Amazing Human Body - Parts 1, 2 & 3** (P) Your body is the most sophisticated organism on Earth. It is a scientific marvel, and much about it remains a mystery. This three-part series uses cutting-edge graphics to reveal the surprisingly beautiful biological processes that keep you alive.						**Antiques Roadshow - Celebrating Latino Heritage** (See CPTV, Sept. 17 at 8 p.m.)	
spirit	**The Roosevelts: An Intimate History - Part 7: A Strong and Active Faith** FDR is determined to see the war through to victory.				**POV - 93Queen** (P) A group of women create an all-female volunteer ambulance corps in a Hasidic enclave.			**Amanpour & Company**** (P)
THU|20	**8:00**	**8:30**	**9:00**	**9:30**	**10:00**	**10:30**	**11:00**	**11:30**
cptv	**The Island Next Door: Puerto Rico and...** (P)	**Breaking Big - Mayor Carmen Yulín Cruz** (P)	**800 Words, Season 2 - Part 5** George's date with Katie is the only news in Weld.		**Hinterland, Season 1 - The Girl in the Water, Part 1** A young student's body is found in marshlands.		**This Old House**	**This Old House**
spirit	**This Old House**	**This Old House**	**This Old House**	**This Old House**	**I'll Have What Phil's Having - Italy**		**Amanpour & Company** (P) (See page 99.)	
FRI|21	**8:00**	**8:30**	**9:00**	**9:30**	**10:00**	**10:30**	**11:00**	**11:30**
cptv	**Midsomer Murders - Blood on the Saddle, Part 2** (P) (See CPTV, Sept. 14 at 8 p.m.)		**Death in Paradise, Season 7 - Dark Memories** (P) Someone from JP's past is caught at a crime scene.		**Great Performances - Chita Rivera: A Lot of Livin' to Do** The legendary performer is showcased.		**Pedro E. Guerrero: American Masters** The Mexican-American photographer is profiled.	
spirit	**Variety Studio: Actors on Actors - Debra Messing and Sharon...** (P)		**The Public Television Feature Film Collection - Dial M for Murder** (See CPTV Spirit, Sept. 7 at 10 p.m.)				**Amanpour & Company** (P) (See page 99.)	
SAT|22	**8:00**	**8:30**	**9:00**	**9:30**	**10:00**	**10:30**	**11:00**	**11:30**
cptv	**Viewers' Favorites*** (Start: 7:30 p.m.) CPTV presents special Saturday night programming.		**The Public Television Feature Film Collection - Oceans 11** (P) Veterans of the 82nd Airborne Division devise an elaborate plot to simultaneously rob five casinos. Frank Sinatra stars.				**Mike Nichols: American Masters** The prolific director discusses his life and career.	
spirit	**A Place to Call Home, Season 4 - Catch the Tiger**		**Death in Paradise, Season 7 - Dark Memories**		**The Tunnel, Season 3: Vengeance - Part 6** (P)		**Arthur and George on Masterpiece - Part 3**	
SUN|23	**8:00**	**8:30**	**9:00**	**9:30**	**10:00**	**10:30**	**11:00**	**11:30**
cptv	**Anne of Green Gables: Fire and Dew*** (P) (Start: 7:30 p.m.) Anne journeys to Queen's College.		**The Miniaturist on Masterpiece - Part 3** (P) Johannes is on trial for his life; Marin faces a struggle.		**My Mother and Other Strangers, Season 1 on Masterpiece - Part 3** Nurse Tillie comes to the rescue.		**Breaking Big - Christian Siriano** (P)	**Breaking Big - Gretchen Carlson**
spirit	**Operation Maneater - Great White Shark**		**Blue Planet - Part 8: Great Barrier Reef**		**Nature's Microworlds** (P)	**Natural Curiosities** (P)	**NOVA - Making North America: Human**	
MON|24	**8:00**	**8:30**	**9:00**	**9:30**	**10:00**	**10:30**	**11:00**	**11:30**
cptv	**Antiques Roadshow - Birmingham, Part 2** Highlights include 1968 letters from a young Bill Clinton.		**Antiques Roadshow - Birmingham, Part 3** An autographed first edition of *To Kill a Mockingbird* is featured.		**Finding Your Roots, Season 4 - The Impression** Guests include Larry David and Bernie Sanders.		**The Island Next Door: Puerto Rico and...**	**Breaking Big - Mayor Carmen Yulín Cruz**
spirit	**Weekends with Yankee**	**Peregrine Dame** (P)	**Cruising the Three Gorges** (P) Travelers visit the Three Gorges.		**Latino Americans - Part 3: War and Peace**		**Amanpour & Company** (P) (See page 99.)	



The Amazing Human Body

Wednesday, September 19 at 8 p.m. on CPTV

Follow the human body on three incredible journeys: human growth from a single cell to more than 37 trillion cells, the role our skin plays in keeping us safe from harm, and the secrets of our unique face and genes.

Prime Time | September 25-30

TUE | 25	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00	11:30
cptv	The Great American Read - Heroes (P) Explore some of literature's favorite protagonists.		The Mayo Clinic: Faith - Hope - Science (P) Featuring the voices of Tom Hanks, Sam Waterston, and more, this film explores the clinic's 150-year history and what it means to "put the needs of the patient first."				Visionaries - Solidarity Bridge (P)	Visionaries - Only in the Darkness...
spirit	Legends of Airpower (P)	Legends of Airpower (P)	NOVA - The Origami Revolution Origami sparks scientific advances.		The Island Next Door...	Breaking Big - Mayor Carmen...	Amanpour & Company (P) (See page 99.)	

WED | 26	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00	11:30
cptv	Nature - Owl Power How owls hunt and fly so silently are influencing 21st-century technology.		NOVA - Transplanting Hope (P) Follow patients who urgently need transplants.		The Mayo Clinic: Faith - Hope - Science (See CPTV, Sept. 25 at 9 p.m.)			
spirit	Mark Twain - Part 1 Journey through Sam Clemens' early days along the Mississippi River to the town of Hannibal, Missouri.				POV - Survivors (P) Meet two Sierra Leonean healthcare workers who heroically face the Ebola epidemic.			Amanpour & Company** (P)

THU | 27	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00	11:30
cptv	Father Brown, Season 6 - The Flower of the Fairway (P) A body is discovered at a new golf club.		800 Words, Season 2 - Part 6 The summer people hit Weld with a vengeance.		Hinterland, Season 1 - The Girl in the Water, Part 2 (See CPTV, Sept. 20 at 10 p.m.)		This Old House	This Old House
spirit	This Old House	This Old House	This Old House	This Old House	I'll Have What Phil's Having - Paris		Amanpour & Company (P) (See page 99.)	

FRI | 28	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00	11:30
cptv	Midsomer Murders - The Silent Land, Part 1 (P) An unpopular librarian turns up dead.		Death in Paradise, Season 7 - Melodies of Murder (P) The team must crack a cold case.		Hispanic Heritage Awards 2018 (P) This year's Hispanic Heritage Award winners are honored.		Voces on PBS - Now en Español Follow the pros and cons of being a Latina actress in Hollywood.	
spirit	Variety Studio: Actors on Actors - Jennifer Lawrence and Adam...		The Public Television Feature Film Collection - Oceans 11 (See CPTV, Sept. 22 at 9 p.m.)				Amanpour & Company (P) (See page 99.)	

SAT | 29	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00	11:30
cptv	The Public Television Feature Film Collection - Dial M for Murder (See CPTV Spirit, Sept. 7 at 10 p.m.)				The Public Television Feature Film Collection - Body Heat (See CPTV Spirit, Sept. 14 at 9 p.m.)			
spirit	A Place to Call Home, Season 4 - Catch the Tiger		Death in Paradise, Season 7 - Melodies of Murder		Unforgotten, Season 1 on Masterpiece - Part 1 A skeleton is found buried in a cellar.			Breaking Big - Danai Gurira

SUN | 30	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00	11:30
cptv	The Durrells in Corfu, Season 3 on Masterpiece - Part 1 (P) Louisa tries to advise her children.		Poldark, Season 4 on Masterpiece - Part 1 (P) Hugh Armitage is set to challenge George Warleggan's seat.		My Mother and Other Strangers, Season 1 on Masterpiece - Part 4 Capt. Dreyfuss hatches a plan.		Breaking Big - Danai Gurira	Breaking Big - Eddie Huang
spirit	Operation Maneater - Polar Bear Polar bears cause havoc in Canada.		Operation Maneater - Crocodile Visit a place known for croc attacks.		Nature's Microworlds (P)	Natural Curiosities (P)	Weekend Explorer	Weekend Explorer



Poldark

SEASON 4 on MASTERPIECE

Sundays at 9 p.m. beginning September 30 on CPTV

Aidan Turner is back as the dashing Captain Ross Poldark alongside Eleanor Tomlinson as Demelza. This season, the drama continues when Poldark gears up for a big move to London to become a Member of Parliament.

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Carla's Shrimp Scampi Ravioli with Lemon 'Buerre-Blanc' Sauce

FROM FAITH:

Here is a quick and convenient weeknight recipe from Carla's Pasta, a generous sponsor of the Faith Middleton Food Schmooze®

Faith

INGREDIENTS

One 15 oz. package of Carla's Pasta Shrimp Scampi Ravioli

¾ stick of unsalted butter

2 cloves chopped garlic

⅛ cup white wine

½ lemon, juiced

1 pinch crushed hot red pepper (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Melt butter in sauté pan over medium-high heat. Add garlic.
2. Sauté garlic and cook until slightly golden. Add white wine and lemon juice, then reduce by half to thicken. Add crushed pepper.
3. Cook ravioli according to package instructions.
4. Toss ravioli in sauté pan to coat with sauce and serve.



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History vs. the Wrecking Ball

BRIDGEPORT'S FREEMAN HOUSES ARE THE LAST REMNANT OF A UNIQUE COMMUNITY OF COLOR. WHY IS THE SITE ONE OF THE MOST ENDANGERED HISTORIC LOCATIONS IN AMERICA?

Something about the houses caught Charles Brilvitch's eye.

It was 1980 and Brilvitch, who would go on to become Bridgeport's city historian, was dropping his clothes off at a dry cleaner. The shop was cobbled onto the front of an old house. Brilvitch noticed the house next door was the same style and just as old. He began to investigate.

Ultimately, he and others discovered the houses were the last remnants of a long-forgotten community — one unlike any other in Connecticut, and possibly the world.

Built in 1848 by sisters Mary and Eliza Freeman, the Freeman Houses are the last original surviving structures of a community of free blacks and Native Americans known as Liberia and later Little Liberia. It thrived for much of the 19th century, and at its height consisted of dozens of buildings and businesses including a school, two churches, a Masonic lodge and even a four-story hotel that was Bridgeport's tallest building and first seaside tourist attraction. The community also attracted the attention of luminaries such as Frederick Douglass and served as an Underground Railroad destination.

"This was a place where you could come live with your family in the open and use your God-given talents and prosper," says Maisa Tisdale, president of the Mary & Eliza Freeman Center for History and Community, a nonprofit working to restore the houses. "During this time when 90 percent of all people of African descent in this country were in shackles and Native American communities had been decimated, you had this community that was living free and ushering other people to freedom."

Despite the history they represent, the houses are in dramatic disrepair and in danger both from the ravages of time and the shortsightedness of city policies. They were named to the National Register of Historic Places in 1999 and are part of Connecticut's Freedom Trail, but remain so imperiled that in June they were designated one of "America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places" by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.



Top sign declares the Freeman Houses in Bridgeport one of "America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places;" the bottom reads "This Place Matters."

In 2008 the houses were scheduled for demolition by the city, but were saved by community members aware of their significance. Ownership of the houses was transferred to the Mary & Eliza Freeman Center in 2010.

Tisdale, whose ancestors lived in the community, says the "most endangered" designation will help bring awareness to the houses and raise the estimated $1.6 million necessary to restore them. The organization's goal is to create a museum and community-gathering point on the site.

Todd Levine, a historian with the State Historic Preservation Office, which oversees the Freedom Trail, says the site is "a symbol of hope, it's a symbol of equality, so we definitely want to see the buildings put back in service."

The houses are thought to be structurally sound, but are not much to look at today. They sit across the street from the parking lot for the Bridgeport & Port Jefferson Ferry, their long-faded paint and plywood-boarded windows glimpsed through the chain-link fence in front of them. The whole scene is framed by the P.J. Murphy Moving & Storage building and the striped smokestack of a nearby power plant, both of which tower over the diminutive houses.

Yet Tisdale sees through the faded paint and time-worn wood.

"There is beauty in things that are old even before they're restored because we know that they tell a story," she says.

First settled in the 1820s, the community in the city's South End was known as Ethiope by outsiders, but those within referred to it as Liberia ("a free land"). The South End, about a half-mile south of the city's "white" town, was affordable because whites believed it was unhealthy to live near the sea, Tisdale says. Those who came to Little Liberia saw the potential of the area and created a settlement spiritually and economically linked to the sea. Full-submersion baptisms were performed in the waters of Long Island Sound and the men found work on ships.

"The sea was the only place where black men could make the same amount of money as white men," Tisdale says.

The women in the community worked as laundresses, restaurant owners and cooks. The Freeman sisters, who were born in Derby and never married, invested in properties with great savviness. By her death, Mary had between $30,000 and $50,000 in holdings, making her Bridgeport's second-richest citizen, trailing only the legendary P.T. Barnum.

As the 1900s approached, Bridgeport's waterfront became increasingly industrialized and Little Liberia disappeared, but one of the community's churches, the Walters Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church, remains in Bridgeport.

Of late, progress toward restoring the homes has been made. A few years ago, the new addition that had housed the laundry shop that inspired Brilvitch's research in 1980 was removed and the site partially excavated. There was a wealth of archaeological finds including a pipe, bottles and buttons made from seashells. Currently an exhibit featuring recently discovered artifacts, alongside artwork inspired by Little Liberia, is on display at Burt Chernow Galleries at Housatonic Valley Community College in Bridgeport.

This summer the Mary & Eliza Freeman Center received a $50,000 grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation and a $9,999 grant from Connecticut Humanities.

"The fact that people are homeowners, that they're business owners, that they're supporting one another, that they're building churches, that they have libraries, it's quite extraordinary for the time period," says Jason Mancini, executive director of Connecticut Humanities. "I can't think of any other place in Connecticut where that's really happening in such a substantive way."

PHOTO: BRIAN A. POUNDS

I'm Not Old Enough.

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6-10 mint leaves
0.75 oz simple syrup or 2 tsp of sugar
0.75 oz freshly squeezed lime juice
1.5 oz soda water

Gently crush mint leaves between your fingers and add to a cocktail shaker. Fill the shaker with ice, Tito's Handmade Vodka, simple syrup or sugar, and fresh lime juice. Shake well, and pour everything including the ice into a glass. Top with soda water. Garnish with mint sprig and lime wedge.



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